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E HISTORICAL BASIS OF

SOCIALISM IN ENGLAND

BY

H. M. HYNDMAN

LONDON
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1883

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TO MY WIFE,

WHOSE NEVER-FAILING CHEERFULNESS AND COURAGE

HAVE HELPED AND SUPPORTED ME WHEN ALL HAS LOOKED DARK

FOR THE CAUSE OF THE PEOPLE,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED WITH THE DEEPEST

LOVE AND REGARD

BY THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

THE object of this book is to give a sketch of the social and economical development of England from the fifteenth century to the present time. In doing this, it has been necessary to treat of political economy from a point of view which of late years, at any rate, has very rarely been taken by English writers. Political economy is that branch of human knowledge which deals with the production and the distribution of wealth; but the relations in which such production and distribution are carried on vary greatly in different ages and in different countries. Moreover, the manner in which wealth is produced, the power, that is, which man has over the forces of nature, is the basis of the whole social, political, and religious forms of the period at which the examination is made. Forms of social intercourse, custom, law, political institutions, and religion no doubt influence even economical methods long after their origin has been forgotten, and constitute the conservative side of human society, keeping back the changes made necessary by the more or less rapid modification of the system of production below; just as in the evolution of species the hereditary tendency struggles with the growing adaptation to altered conditions of life. My endeavour has been to apply these theories without fear or prejudice, and certainly without the slightest bias in favour of any existing political party, to

the history of our own country. Hitherto the history of England, and particularly the history of our industry, our commerce, and our conquests, has been written almost exclusively from the middle-class point of view. Middle-class histories are still the text-books at all our schools and universities; middle-class political economy likewise finds favour in all directions. Even men who pride themselves upon their sympathy with the democratic system of our ancient Anglo-Saxon village communities have failed to see beyond the limits of their own class when treating of the affairs of the last two hundred years. At most the landlord class has been denounced as the chief cause of the degradation and impoverishment of the mass of the people during the period of the greatest increase of national wealth.

In beginning with the fifteenth century I have of course evaded the necessity of explaining in full the feudal system based upon serfdom; and the earlier portion of the work makes no pretence to be a detailed historical record even of the struggles of the people. Later periods are treated more thoroughly. My indebtedness to the famous German historical school of political economy headed by Karl Marx, with Friedrich Engels and Rodbertus immediately following, I have fully acknowledged throughout. The chapters which deal with "Labour and Surplus Value" and "The Great Machine Industry" seemed to me essential to a right understanding of our economical growth, though strictly speaking they are not historical. What a flood of light Marx's researches in this field have thrown upon the whole record of our development is not yet understood in this country. My references to the "Capital" are to the French edition, for the reason that French is unfortunately much more commonly known in England than German. An authorised

English translation will, I am told, certainly appear within the next few months, together with a translation of the unpublished second part. The works of Engels, Rodbertus, Held, Meyer, &c., however, are only to be read in German.

Since this work was in type an article on "Socialism in England" has appeared in the *Quarterly Review.* Forty pages are devoted to a little book of mine entitled, "England for All," published about two years and a half ago. The criticism, which is very laboured, has been fully met, by anticipation, in the following pages.

In leaving the book to the judgment of the public, I do so with the hope that, whatever errors and shortcomings I may have been guilty of, some readers will be induced to look more carefully than they otherwise would into the system of production and the social arrangements around them. My friends and fellow-workers of the Democratic Federation, whose zeal, enthusiasm, and self-sacrifice have given so great an impetus to the cause, will I trust find in it some help in the noble work they have undertaken.

10 Devonshire Street,
Portland Place, London, W.,
November 8, 1883.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

THE GOLDEN AGE 1

CHAPTER II.

THE IRON AGE 23

CHAPTER III.

THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS 59

CHAPTER IV.

LABOUR AND SURPLUS VALUE 98

CHAPTER V.

THE GROWTH OF THE PROLETARIAT 138

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER V. 189

CHAPTER VI.

MOVEMENTS OF THE PEOPLE 193

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREAT MACHINE INDUSTRY 233

and prosperity were not upset by any of the troubles of the time. Defeat abroad and pestilence at home, civil wars, and formidable insurrections did not seriously affect the general welfare. The main body of the workers fought their own fights, and returned peaceably to their towns or homesteads, looking on with the calmest indifference whilst the barons and their retainers cut one another's throats for the cause of York or Lancaster.

Learning in our modern sense the people certainly had not; but the education of the time was wide-spread, the universities have never been so crowded since by all classes, and Piers Ploughman and Chaucer, Wyclif and Caxton, laid the ground-work of that homely English speech which, properly used, is to-day the strongest and the clearest of modern tongues. The homes of the people were filthy,* and much that we now hold to be necessary for health was thought quite useless; nevertheless the finest buildings in these islands are of this date, whilst the stone-carving and woodwork, the stained glass and tapestry which remain, testify to taste and training of a very high order. As to the labourers, they ate, drank, and worked well, and foreigners gazed in wonder at the rich clothing, sturdy frames, and independent mien of our English common men. The truth, of course, is that below the troubles and disturbances on the surface the great main stream of human life and happiness flowed on unchecked, owing to the steady operation of economical and social causes which were peculiar to this epoch. The king, the nobles, and the clergy were the leaders of a free, and, in the main, prosperous community; and, although cases of tyranny were not rare, and the upper classes then as ever lost no chance of

* Not worse, however, than the cottages of our agricultural labourers to-day in any respect. See Chapter X.

increasing their wealth and power at the expense of those below, the craftsmen and labourers were nowise behindhand in championing the liberties they had so hardly won.

At the end of the fourteenth century (1381-1400), serfdom and villenage were practically done away in England. The great risings of Wat Tyler and Flannoc (1381), though put down at the moment by treachery and false promises, really secured freedom for the mass of the people. Such an insurrection as the Peasants' War did not arise from the trifling cause commonly put forward.* The priest John Ball had genuine grievances to point to and definite reforms to propose when he addressed his stirring speeches to tens of thousands of his stalwart countrymen. Thus was he in the habit of addressing Tyler's followers in support of great social and political principles:—"My friends, things cannot be well for us in this England of ours, nor ever will, until all things shall be in common; when there shall be neither lord nor vassal, and all grades shall be levelled; when the nobles shall be no more masters than we. How ill have they treated us! and why do they thus keep us in bondage? Are not Adam and Eve their ancestors as well as ours? What can they show, and what reason can they give, why they should be more masters than we? except, maybe, because they make us labour and work for them to spend. They are clothed in velvets and rich stuffs, trimmed with ermine and other furs, whilst we are forced to wear coarse cloth. They have wines, spices, and nice bread, whilst we have only rye and straw refuse; if we drink it must be water. They have grand houses and homesteads, but we must face wind and rain as we labour

* Professor Thorold Rogers is undoubtedly right in his remarks as to the effect of the Peasants' War. Though the rising itself was defeated, the people practically won.

in the open; yet our labour it is which keeps up their luxury. We are called slaves; and if we fail at our tasks we are flogged; and we have no king to complain to, nor anyone who will hear us and do justice. Let us go to the king, who is young, and remonstrate with him on our slavery, telling him we must have it otherwise, or we ourselves shall find the remedy. If we wait on him in a body, all those who come under the title of slaves, or are held in bondage, will follow us in hope of being free. When the king sees us we shall get a favourable answer, or we must seek ourselves to amend our lot."*

Attempts were in fact being made, not only to reduce the wages of day labourers by enforcing anew the statute of King Edward III. in relation to payments to hinds and craftsmen, and to maintain the serfs who still existed in their degraded position, but to bring back the old forced labour, which had been gradually commuted for money payments. Throughout the country districts of England there were now established hundreds of thousands of yeomen and lifeholders, who had freed themselves from the more galling trammels of feudalism, and any such attacks upon their hard-won rights or the rights of the free labourers, met with a stout resistance.

The tenants on the feudal estates, whether small or large,

* It is well to show that the idea of socialism is no foreign importation into England. Tyler, Cade, Ball, Kett, More, Bellers, Spence, Owen, read to me like sound English names: not a foreigner in the whole batch. They all held opinions which our capitalist-landlord House of Commons would denounce as direct plagiarisms from "continental revolutionists." We islanders have been revolutionists however, and will be again, ignorant as our capitalists are of the history of the people. Edmund Burke, with his fine sophistical Whiggery, of course sneered at coarse, vigorous John Ball. But then, so far as we know, Ball did not sell himself to the nobles as Burke did.

had also as good a right and title to their lands, subject to the dues which they paid to the lords or the church, as the nobles, the clergy, or the king had to theirs. Competition for farms in our modern sense was unknown. The relations between the various parties interested were in the main personal, and these continued even when the main fabric of feudalism was falling into decay. Such a body of tillers of the soil produced their crops as a whole for the use of their own people. Farming with a view to profit alone was only just beginning. Though England at this time exported its superfluity of grain, wool, and hides after the people had been well fed, well clothed, and well shod, only a few large landed proprietors carried on this business with a direct view to commercial gain. The mass of the small farmers worked on their land in much the same spirit as the early settlers on the eastern coast of North America, or, as some farmers do to-day in the Western States, though with even less idea of exchanging the greater part of their crops. Their methods of tillage were rude, but they continued to get out of the soil an excellent subsistence for themselves and their families, as well as for the hinds who ordinarily fed at the yeoman farmer's own table.

Holding the land, having the implements and the produce alike at their disposal, subject only to certain payments whose amount was well established, such people were free in every sense, economical and personal. No man could call upon them to work, none to fight save of their own free-will and consent; they had at hand the means for feeding, clothing, and housing themselves and their families without being beholden to any. All records of the time go to show what a fine, vigorous folk were these independent

small farmers of the fifteenth century. The longer these favourable conditions continued, the sturdier and more independent became these people who were the backbone of the country. We can see how quickly even in our own time good food and healthy surroundings improve the character of a population, how misery and squalor fade away under sound economical conditions for the mass of the people.* This happy state of things for the English farmers lasted about four generations, and we need feel no surprise at the admirable result for England as a whole.

The country labourers in regard to diet, clothing, and house-room were little worse off than the yeomen and farmers themselves. Indeed, the line between the two was not easy to draw. A small farmer would work, at the high wages then current, for his richer neighbour, for the lord, the priory, or the state, side by side with the hind who at other times might be in his own employ. For the labourer himself owned land, and worked upon it for the support of himself and his family. From the produce of several acres he could obtain sufficient to render him a very independent bargainer for the use of his vital force on other men's business. Each labourer's cottage had land attached to it, and he lived, it may be said, almost rent free. After the abolition of villenage, the small money payment that might be due was a trifling percentage compared with what his labour could procure for him in wages, food, and clothing from work on his own land or work for

* The children of our worn-out workpeople transplanted to Canada and New Zealand become magnificent specimens of the human race, far exceeding their parents in weight and stature. This I have often observed myself. The children on board the training-ships when well fed and well clad grow also into fine lads enough, though taken from very bad conditions of life in our cities.

others. He was a wage-earner for the most part when it suited it him to be so: by no means a wage-earner at the disposal of the employing class in return for the bare means of subsistence his life through.

For in addition to the land which he held with his cottage, there lay around every hamlet and village, there were to be seen on the outskirts of every country town, large stretches of common land on which the labourers might depasture their cattle, sheep, pigs, or geese. There were few, indeed, who could not avail themselves of this right of common property. Rates of wages by themselves show this. In all periods, in all countries, and under all systems of society there is but one test of the well-being of the great mass of the people,—that is, what can a man get in food, clothing, and housing in return for a day's or a week's work? It matters not whether he gets this return directly or indirectly, provided he is master of his own body and is assured of steady employment. In the fifteenth century, then, the English country labourer with his cow, his sheep, or his geese on the common, and his four-acre patch at least round his cabin, received no less than 4d. a day without food. If fed at the farmer's own table, he got from 2d. to 2½d. But this same 4d. a day for plain unskilled labour could buy something worth having in those times.* Less than eighteen days' work would purchase the

* The prices of diverse sorts of provisions and fresh Achates spent in the priory of Southwick from A° 2 R. Henry V. to the end of 2 Henry VI. taken forth of an old parchment book written at the time :—

Wheat, at 4s. and 5s. 4d. the qr., betwixt both.	Salt, qr. 4s.
Malt, from 3s. 4d. to 5s.	Oxen and bulls, 12s. to 16s.
Barley, from 3s. 2d. to 4s. 10d.	Calves, 1s. 4d. to 2s. 8d.
Oats, from 1s. 10d. to 2s. 4d.	Muttons, 1s. 2d. to 1s. 4d.
	Goats, 2s. 6d. to 4s.

agricultural labourer a quarter of the best wheat. This, taking the market price, including transport; and of course the labourer himself could get his portion of the harvest at a much lower rate on the spot. A good cow he could earn by less than six weeks' work; a sow would cost him little more than ten days' work; a fat sheep would be worth about three days' work; and a fat goose rather more than one day's work. All these are market prices, whilst it is easy to see that the labourer in the country districts could obtain them at a much lower price on the average. Strong beer he could always have as much of as he wanted without greatly limiting his other expenditure or at all lowering his standard of life. The labourer's clothing was at higher prices in proportion; but that the people were well clad will shortly appear from even stronger evidence than that of prices. So well did the people fare, that Piers Ploughman, who certainly has no sympathy with the nobles or the church, admits that even beggars after harvest would not eat other than wheaten bread.* Even the comparatively few labourers who did not hold any land were in very good case. That their houses were rough and their domestic utensils rude in the extreme are drawbacks which they

Hogs for pork or bacon, from 2s. 3d.
Lambs, from 4d. to 8d.
Capons, at 3d.
Hens, at 2d.
Chickens, ½d. to 1d.
Eggs, 25 a penny.
Cheese, lb. ½d.
Honey, quart 3d.
Cider, tun 10s. to 14s.
Mallard. 1½d. to 2d.
Pigs (*i.e.*, sucking), 2½d. to 5d.
Geese, 2½d. to 5d.
Pigeons, 3 a penny.
Conies, 2d.
Fresh congers, 4d. to 1s. 8d.

—Thorold Rogers, "History of Agriculture and Prices in England," vol. iv. p. 111.

* "Would no beggar eat bread that in it beans were,
But of cockit and clemantyne or else clene whete."
—"Vision of Piers Ploughman."

shared with the highest in the land. The most extravagant kings and nobles were not well provided for in these respects, and the dirt of the farm-house or cabin was not much, if at all, worse than that of the castle or palace.

It would seem, then, that the oft-quoted passage in the work of the Chief-Justice Sir John Fortescue, is even on this showing no exaggeration of the condition of the English people in the reign of Henry VI. He compares their condition with that of the French peasantry, "whose smock-frocks are make of hemp much like to sackcloth, woollen cloth they wear none, except it be very coarse, and that only in their coats under their said upper garments; neither use they any hose but from the knee upward. The women go barefoot saving on holydays. Neither men nor women eat any flesh, but only lard of bacon, with a small portion of which they fatten their potage and broths. As for roasted or sodden meat of flesh they taste none except it be of the inwards sometimes, and heads of beasts that be killed for gentlemen and merchants." How great is the contrast with the condition of the free Englishman. "The King of England cannot alter the laws or make new ones without the express consent of the whole kingdom in Parliament assembled. Every inhabitant is at his liberty fully to use and enjoy whatever his farm produceth, the fruits of the earth, the increase of his flock and the like; all the improvements he makes, whether by his own proper industry or of those he retains in his service, are his own to use and enjoy without the let, interruption, or denial of any. If he be in any wise injured or oppressed he shall have amends and satisfactions against the party offending. Hence it is that the inhabitants are rich in gold, silver, and in all the necessaries and conveniences of life. They drink no water un-

less at certain times and by way of doing penance. They are fed in great abundance with all sorts of flesh and fish, of which they have plenty everywhere; they are clothed throughout in good woollens; their bedding and other furniture in their houses are of wool, and that in great store. They are also provided with all other sort of household goods and necessary implements for husbandry. Every one according to his rank hath all things which conduce to make life easy and happy." In short, the wealth of the peasantry who made up the mass of the people was extraordinary. They were their own masters, and could speak their mind freely to all. Their sturdy freedom was based upon property and good living.

Nor were the craftsmen at all behind the peasantry. The weavers, the masons, the carpenters, the thatchers, the smiths, the cobblers, the tailors, the saddlers were an exceedingly prosperous folk, who earned on an average about half as much again as the unskilled labourer, or about 6d. to 7d., as against 4d. a day. They worked for the most part, with the exception of the masons, for the immediate needs of their own neighbourhood, forming a portion of the social body as essential as the peasants themselves, nor constituting a special wage-earning class separated from their means of production. In the towns at this time the craft-guilds had gained strength, but still the step up from the journeyman to the master-craftsman was easy, and in most trades no man could be a master who had not himself passed through all the stages of the craft, from the unpaid apprentice to the highly skilled craftsman. The purchasing power of his wages, even making some slight allowance for house rent, may be judged from the scale of prices given above. Strikes, however, of the journeymen against the masters, were not un-

common in all trades, and special acts were passed against combinations of workmen in the building-trades in the reigns of Edward III. and Henry VI.

The organisation of the craft-guilds, when they really served the purpose of a combination of the workers for the maintenance of their freedom and privileges, was thoroughly democratic. "The very soul of the craft-guild was its meetings which brought all the guild-brothers together every week or quarter."* It is true that these guilds were barely constructed before they ceased to serve the purposes of the workers, and the competition of villein labourers from the country had been felt even earlier. Still these combinations did secure for the working, trading, and even mercantile class in the towns advantages which they could not have got in any other way. At any rate, it is clear that the skilled workmen of such towns as London, Norwich, or Bristol, and the masons, carvers, and carpenters who worked at the great ecclesiastical edifices and public buildings, were exceedingly well paid for their labour, had more certainty of work, and in the main, better conditions of life than the skilled artisans of to-day, who are liable at any moment to be brought into competition with machinery, or thrown out of employment suddenly by "bad times."

Sumptuary laws prove, if possible, even more clearly how well-to-do the people were. Their luxurious living quite scandalised the upper classes, who thought they ought to restrain such woeful waste by special enactment. Accordingly a statute was framed in 1463, by which agricultural labourers were not allowed to use materials for clothing which cost more than two shillings a yard, nor were they to have a pair of stockings which cost more than fourteen-

* Brentano on English Guilds (Toulmin Smith).

pence a pair; silver girdles were also prohibited. A wife was ordered not to give more than a shilling for a head-dress. These ordinances were wholly void of effect, and twenty years later the labourers were allowed to have stockings which cost eighteenpence a pair, and a wife might by law spend no less a sum than one shilling and eightpence on her head-dress. Truly, considering the fall which has since taken place in the value of money, these statutes amount to pretty much the same thing as if to-day Parliament passed an Act to prohibit common ploughmen from appearing in a garb of rich Genoa velvet, with silk stockings and gold buttons and studs, whilst their wives should on no account have caps of the most costly Brussels lace.

Such, then, was the general condition of the people, peasantry and yeomen, labourers and craftsmen, in the fifteenth century. Above them stood the barons with their retainers, the church with its great possessions, and the king; the mercantile class was still in its infancy, though gaining strength towards the end of the century. The king's power was much restricted; but the vast extent of crown lands, and his position as the head of the whole feudal system, gave an able monarch great opportunities, whilst it rendered a feeble one, no matter how well-meaning, a mere plaything for favourites and intriguers. Henry V. and Edward IV. could do almost what they pleased with the barons and the people; Henry VI. was at the mercy of both. Jack Cade's great insurrection arose from the shameful misgovernment which went on. It is unfortunate that the whole history of the rising was written by his opponents. But it is clear, even from their admissions, that Cade's followers were no rowdy ruffians with empty bellies, but precisely the sort of men who have made

serious revolutions in all ages; and, at the same time, that the districts which he controlled, after his first victories, were well-governed and contented. The story that he pretended to be Mortimer is manifestly an invention, and had he succeeded in getting possession of the king's person, it is more than probable that our political history would have taken a different course. The temporary success of the insurrection, the admirable government of London, as admitted by his enemies, and the peaceable dispersion of Cade's army, on the promise of reform by the Parliament and the king, proves that it had the sympathy of the people. Cade, as his proclamation and demands show, was much in advance of his time; there is certainly nothing whatever to prove that he was the mere empty-headed demagogue represented by the paid scribes of the nobility, but rather that he was the vigorous leader of free, vigorous men. The barons, indeed, were far greater disturbers of the public peace at this time than the people, and the economical effects of the Wars of the Roses were very serious in the following century, though little noted at the time.

A great noble of this period, or even a baron of lower degree, held an enviable position in many respects. Secure of his dignity, surrounded by a number of retainers and dependents who looked to him for leadership, alike in peace and in war, with sufficient income as a rule to maintain his household in comfort, and to go in full equipment to the wars, taking part in the festivals of the people, and enjoying the sports and jousts of his own class, the baron of the fifteenth century, though often rough and uncultured, put forward the best side of feudalism. The Wars of the Roses swept away very nearly the whole of the old nobility. During their continuance the number of retainers was

enormously increased. The people at large taking no interest in the war, the barons on both sides were driven to increase their own personal following beyond all reason, at an enormous expense, which fell wholly upon their own resources, and ran them deeply into debt. Warwick, the king-maker, with his splendid array of retainers, was but the most formidable of a number of feudal magnates who went forth to fight for a cause which proved ruinous for the time to the nobles on both sides, and in the long run still more ruinous to the people as well.

The relations of the Church, the monasteries, and the clergy to the people were also most important from every point of view. There is nothing more noteworthy in the history of the human mind than the manner in which this essential portion of English society in the middle-ages has been handled by our ordinary economists, chroniclers, and religionists. Even sober, and in the main tolerably conscientious writers seem to lose their heads or become afraid to tell the truth on this matter. Just as the modern capitalist can see nothing but anarchy and oppression in the connection between the people and the feudal noble, so the authors who represent the middle-class economy of our time, the Protestant divines whose creed is the devil take the hindmost here and hereafter, fail to discover anything but luxury, debauchery, and hypocrisy in the Catholic Church of the fifteenth century.

It is high time that, without any prejudice in favour of that Church, the nonsense which has been foisted on to the public by men interested in suppressing the facts, should be exposed. It is not true that the Church of our ancestors was the organised fraud which it suits fanatics to represent it; it is not true that the monasteries, priories, and nunneries

were mere receptacles for all uncleanness and lewdness; it is not true that the great revenues of the celibate clergy and the celibate recluses were squandered as a rule in riotous living. As a mere question of religion, Catholicism was as good as any creed which has ever found acceptance amongst men. Abuses doubtless there were, and most of them were bitterly attacked by members of the Church themselves; tyranny and persecution there were too in many forms; but the Church, as all know, was the one body in which equality of conditions was the rule from the start. There, at least, the man of ability, who outside her pale was forced to bow down before some Norman baron whose ruffianly ancestor had formed part of William's gang of marauders, could rise to a position in which this rough, unlettered swashbuckler grovelled before him. Sixtus V. was picked up out of the gutter; our Englishman, Nicholas Breakspear, Adrian IV., was a poor labourer's son; and these are but two instances, out of thousands, of distinguished ecclesiastics of humble birth.

However dangerous, also, the spiritual authority of the Church may appear to us, it was used for the most part, notwithstanding all the hideous corruptions of the papal court in the days of the Borgias and others, for the people and against the dominant class; and its influence, as history shows, was almost unbounded. Kings and barons alike bowed and trembled before it. The great art of the time, too, was, like all other great art, for public uses, and devoted to religion. But all this was trifling compared with the work done in the way of general education. The conventual establishments and the parish priests did far more than is commonly supposed in the direction of elementary teaching. But the higher education, the universities?

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The relations of the Church, the monasteries, and the clergy to the people were also most important from every point of view. There is nothing more noteworthy in the history of the human mind than the manner in which this essential portion of English society in the middle-ages has been handled by our ordinary economists, chroniclers, and religionists. Even sober, and in the main tolerably conscientious writers seem to lose their heads or become afraid to tell the truth on this matter. Just as the modern capitalist can see nothing but anarchy and oppression in the connection between the people and the feudal noble, so the authors who represent the middle-class economy of [illegible] time, the Protestant divines whose creed is the de[illegible] the hindmost here and hereafter, fail to discove[illegible] but luxury, debauchery, and hypocrisy i[illegible] Church of the fifteenth century.

It is high time that, without any p[illegible] that Church, the nonsense which has [illegible] public by men interested in suppressin[illegible] exposed. It is not true that the Ch[illegible] was the organised fraud which it sui[illegible] it; it is not true that the monasteries,

were mere receptacles for all uncleanness and lewdness; it is not true that the great revenues of the celibate clergy and the celibate recluses were squandered as a rule in riotous living. As a mere question of religion, Catholicism was as good as any creed which has ever found acceptance amongst men. Abuses doubtless there were, and most of them were bitterly attacked by members of the Church themselves; tyranny and persecution there were too in many forms; but the Church, as all know, was the one body in which equality of conditions was the rule from the start. There, at least, the man of ability, who outside her pale was forced to bow down before some Norman baron whose ruffianly ancestor had formed part of William's gang of marauders, could rise to a position in which this rough, unlettered swashbuckler grovelled before him. Sixtus V. was picked up out of the gutter; our Englishman, Nicholas Breakspear, Adrian IV., was a poor labourer's son; and these are but two instances, out of thousands, of distinguished ecclesiastics of humble birth.

However dangerous, also, the [illegible] authority of the Church may appear to us, it w[illegible] the most part, notwithstandin[illegible] of the papal court in the [illegible], for the people and [illegible] influence, as his [illegible] and barons alike [illegible] art of the time, [illegible] and devoted [illegible] compared with the [illegible]. The [illegible] priests did for [illegible] [illegible] of elementary [illegible]

sign of more or less complete insanity. The idlers besides, at any rate, did not breed idlers, and their property went to the general church domain. The monkish ignorance and superstition of which we hear so much, the "drones" who slept away their lives in comfort and ease at the cost of other men's labour were no more ignorant and superstitious than a Church of England parson or a Wesleyan preacher, and were less dependent on the labour of their fellows than Baptist orators or radical capitalists of to-day. Of the work which they did as chroniclers and copyists of manuscripts it is needless to speak. But to give an idea of their functions, let us take the evidence of Professor Thorold Rogers, a typical bourgeois economist, imbued with the bitterest hostility to the Catholic Church, and indeed to all forms of society or religion which do not fit in with huckster predominance. "The monasteries were the inns of the middle ages. They also fulfilled functions to a great extent identical with that of parochial relief. They were unpopular (?), and were therefore easy landlords. Some of them, as was asserted, were very important factors in the social economy of the time. They supplied students to the universities. The nuns were often leeches and midwives. The ditch round Godston nunnery is still full of the *aristolochia* which the nuns had introduced, because in the pharmacy of the middle ages it was supposed to assist women in childbirth. . . . . It was the interest of the monastic orders, whose property was often scattered, to keep the means of communication open; and as they were resident landlords who were consumers of their own market produce, it was their interest to keep the roads in good repair."*

This general employment which as landlords resident

* "History of Agriculture and Prices in England," vol. iv.

among the people they afforded, the improvements of the farms and of their own buildings which they carried out, the excellent work in road-making which they did—a task specially necessary in those times—in addition to their action as public alms-givers, teachers, doctors, and nurses, show what useful people many of these much-abused monks and nuns really were. This will be made still more clearly manifest by the grave results which followed upon the suppression of the conventual establishments. That the church, as a whole, held its lands in great part in trust for the people cannot be disputed; and as the children of the people in great part formed the hierarchy of the Church, church property in land then meant something very different from church property in land now. To sigh for a restoration of Catholicism is as absurd as to mourn for yeomen and peasant proprietors, or to lament the destruction of the feudal system in its entirety; but the denunciations of Protestant historians and shopkeeper economists are quite as foolish on the other side.

To return to the more direct interests of the mass of the people. Already, even at the commencement of this period of prosperity and well-being for the many, efforts were being made to cut down the rate of wages in the interest of employers. The famous Statute of Labourers, 23 Edward III., was passed by the Parliament of landowners in order to reduce the "excessive" wages of the year 1349 to the amounts which had been paid before the great plague of the Black Death; another statute to a similar effect being passed a year later. In 1363 these enactments having proved vain, a further attempt was made against the prevailing high wages. This time Parliament struck at the high standard of life among the wage-earners, whether

labourers, artisans, or domestics. Agricultural labourers were not to eat or drink "excessively," or wear any cloth except "blanket and russet wool of twelvepence." The domestic servants were to have only one meal a day of meat or fish, the other meals being made out with "milk, butter, cheese, and other such victuals." These statutes thus indirectly give, like the later sumptuary laws, the best possible evidence of the well-being of the labourers of all kinds, at the same time that they prove the natural disposition of employers. The laws failed of effect. It is true that Brentano argues that the Statute of Labourers was passed in the interest of the whole country, and to prevent a small number of wage-earners from holding their neighbours by the throat and forcing them to pay more than was reasonable for absolutely necessary assistance after such a terrible scourge as the Black Death. But this contention falls to the ground in view of the later enactments, and the attempt to lower the scale of customary diet.

Again in 1388 another statute was passed (12 Rich. II. cap. 4) to regulate wages on a low scale, and sixty years later the scale was raised. But all these laws, as the recorded payments of the period show, remained a dead letter. The emancipated bondmen, however, who flocked to the towns after slavery had become opposed to public feeling and contrary to the teachings of the Church—and there can be no doubt that Wat Tyler's rising contributed largely to bring about its complete abolition—formed economically the ancestors of our present working classes; but the conditions were such that they could still hold their own against their employers, these laws notwithstanding; for here, as at later times, we find that laws by themselves cannot make head against the stream of social development.

The wealth of the people at large prevented the immediate establishment of a capitalist class, though the germs of such a class were already prepared. Up to the beginning of the sixteenth century it may therefore be taken as established, that in spite of the hostile action of Parliament, economical causes beyond the control of the legislature kept the labourers in an independent position, although the contrary intention of the statutes is manifest.

The East of England was at this time by far the most flourishing part of the country, and Norwich was, next to London, the most important town. Trade was rapidly growing, but the principal country business was done at fairs held at intervals. The chief exports were wool, hides, and grain, for which wine, oil, spices, and manufactured goods of certain kinds were received in exchange. The wealthy cities of Flanders were the regular customers of England, whilst the ships of the great Mediterranean mercantile republics often found their way to our ports. Each country, however, worked up its own raw material principally, England its own wool, France its own silk, only the superfluity being exchanged or exported. Most of the manufacture also was carried on in a very small way, the simple machines being adapted only to individual work. Much was done by the farmers' wives themselves. In short, the special feature of the whole period was that freedom having been established, the means of production and exchange were alike at the disposal of the individual. They were small, imperfect, and, in a certain sense, contemptible, and the difficulty of communication kept exchange even of superfluities within limits: but as a result a wage-earner for a day was not necessarily a wage-earner for life; production was carried on for use and not primarily for exchange or for

profit; land was regarded as the means for raising food and stock, not as a capital to return so much rent or profit for money invested; and no one looked to international or even national markets as the great field for the disposal of his produce. Freedom of contract between employer and employed was then really possible to a great extent. But it was a period of small things in all respects, a period when in matters of business the individual counted for much when relations between landowner and tenant, between master-craftsman and journeyman, between farmer and hind, were personal and not purely commercial, when rent was paid not as a result of bitter competition but in return for personal service on both sides, when tithes to the Church meant also payment for clerical aid and provision for the poor.

It was from this period that the sturdy character of Englishmen as a nation was developed, and the nature of the society was such as to encourage the growth of the finest qualities of self-reliance and independence among men. All the ideas of the mass of the people were different from those of our time, and many restrictions which seem to us harmful and injurious, as the stringent usury laws and the attempts to prevent free barter and sale, were meant to check the efforts of one portion of the community to get the better of the other. Granting that much existed that to us seems horribly rude, cruel, and disgusting, admitting that our ancestors suffered from plagues of a more deadly character than any known in modern times, the fact still remains that the common working Englishman of the fifteenth century fared better and was in every respect a more independent vigorous man than his descendant of any later age.

CHAPTER II.

THE IRON AGE.

THERE are few modern historians who do not speak of the sixteenth century as perhaps the most splendid period in the annals of our country. The Glorious Reformation, as Henry VIII.'s strange ecclesiastical revolution is still called, the discovery of America, the grim rule of Philip and Mary, when Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer were burnt at the stake, the long reign of good Queen Bess, with its defeat of the famous Spanish Armada, the wide extension of English piracy and commerce, and the formation of the noble literature which reached its highest embodiment in Shakspeare—such are the chief events of an epoch which has so often been spoken of as one of true greatness, dignity, and glory. It was indeed a stirring time. A new world was being discovered in art and in science in Europe, as well as in actual existence on the other side of the Atlantic. Statesmen and thinkers, churchmen and courtiers, soldiers and navigators, poets and dramatists sweep past us in magnificent array. All is full of life and colour. Few groups stand out in bolder relief on the records of the past than the great men who gathered around the throne of the Tudors. Never before had so great an impulse been given to human enterprise and human imagination; never in England have nobler minds been ready to embrace great opportunities. From the point of view of the dominant class of our day

nothing can be finer than the survey; the rise of the middle class * is surrounded with a splendour which conceals from most observers the growth of misery among the people. Yet from the early years of the sixteenth century until the accession of James I., the lot of the great mass of working Englishmen, which was so flourishing and so wholesome, became miserable in the extreme, and the labourers of England, in the widest sense of the word, were reduced to destitution—plunged from the age of gold into the age of iron. The increase of wealth consequent upon the opening of foreign markets and the improvement in home agriculture, did but create a needy and desperate class in town and country alike.

The rate of wages for various kinds of labour was stationary during the whole of the fifteenth and the earlier portion of the sixteenth century, nor does it appear that the purchasing power of such wages was greatly reduced. Nevertheless, with the close of the Wars of the Roses a change took place which led to much of the general distress and vagabondage that followed after. I have already spoken of the great increase in the numbers of the personal retainers of the barons during the troubled times which ended with the accession of Henry VII. The number of personal retainers ready to fight under his banner or to follow him to court became, indeed, the measure of a noble's importance and power, and the bailiff or steward, who then managed the estates in the same way as the agent of an absentee's Irish property, had to strain all his lord's re-

* The French word bourgeoisie has now been adopted in almost all languages as most clearly conveying the meaning I wish to express. The reign of the bourgeoisie includes the domination of town over country, the supremacy of the trading class, and the capitalist form of production as the main social forces.

sources, and generally to run into debt into the bargain, in order to maintain the baron and these adherents of the house at the capital or in attendance on the King. Consequently when the struggle was over, even as early as the accession of Edward IV., the barons almost without exception found themselves in great poverty and debt. Their first and most obvious course was to reduce their expenditure by discharging their retainers. This they did, and these people, having for the most part no recognised position when thus cut adrift, fell back on the wage-earning class, or even formed bands of vagrants. Thus began the growth of the lack-land class as a class, and of the vagrants without house or home, which brought about such a serious state of affairs later on. But the impoverishment of the nobles and their greed for gain were the cause of still more grave events. Society is never stationary; movement is going on even at times when, to all appearance, economical and social quiescence universally prevails. As in the lower, so in the higher forms of animal life and combination—these flourish, those decay. Thus when all seemed well for our people, the cruel process of uprooting them from the soil had begun which has continued up to the present date.

Henry VII. came to the throne in 1485, marrying Elizabeth of York in the following year. In the year 1489 a statute was enacted for the purpose of putting a stop to enclosures. The great gain which the common lands and open pastures were to the people has been seen, although the lord of the manor and richer commoners frequently took advantage of their superior wealth and strength to put on more cattle or other animals than they were entitled to. But the anxiety of the nobles to get in funds again led them to seize upon these lands and enclose them for their

own use and benefit, to the exclusion and injury of the people of the district. This was then something new, and the drawbacks of the enrichment of the few at the cost of the property of the many were clear, not only as affecting the people themselves, but the monarch and the realm at large. Bacon, in his Henry VII., thus describes the statute and its objects:—"Enclosures at that time began to be more frequent, whereby arable land which could not be manured without people and families was turned into pasture, which was easily rid by a few herdsmen; and the tenancies for years, lives, and at will, whereupon much of the yeomanry lived, were turned into demesnes. This bred a decay of people, and by consequence a decay of towns, churches, tithes, and the like. The king likewise knew full well, and in nowise forgot, that there ensued withal upon this a decay and diminution of subsidies and taxes; for the more gentlemen ever the lower books of subsidies. In remedying of this inconvenience the king's wisdom was admirable, and the parliament's at that time. Enclosures they would not forbid, for that had been to forbid the improvement of the patrimony of the kingdom; nor tillage they would not compel, for that was to strive with nature and utility: but they took a course to take away depopulating enclosures and depopulating pasturage, and yet not by that name, or by any imperious express prohibition, but by consequence. The ordinance was, 'That all houses of husbandry that were used with twenty acres of ground and upwards should be maintained and kept up for corn; together with a competent proportion of land to be used and occupied with them;' and in nowise to be severed from them, as by another statute made afterwards in his successor's time was more fully declared: this upon forfeiture to be taken not by popular action, but by seizure of

the land itself by the kings and lords of fee, as to half the profits till the houses and lands were restored. By this means the houses being kept up did of necessity enforce a dweller; and the proportion of land being kept up, did of necessity enforce that dweller not to be a beggar or a cottager, but a man of some substance, that might keep hinds and servants, and set the plough on going."

From this passage we see that not only were the commons being enclosed at this period, but that the yeomanry and tenants were being gradually expropriated by various devices. Such men as these were, as Bacon goes on to observe, the very mainstay of the king's armies, and invaluable to the country. Turned out they were nevertheless, in spite of this and other statutes, swelling the numbers of the vagrants, beggars, and wage-earners who had sprung from the discharged retainers. Other causes combined to help on this process of enclosures and pasture farming, as well as to swell the ranks of well-to-do landowners and farmers on the one side in the country and those of the mere wanderers on the other.

The rate of wages in Henry VII's. reign was still high, the improvements now being gradually introduced into agriculture increased the abundance and cheapness of corn. Consequently tillage was less profitable, especially to large landowners, some of whom were even then producing for profit, than it had been. Wool had begun to rise in price owing to the demand for the Flanders markets and the increased manufacture at home. Sheep need far fewer hands than arable farming, and there was gain both ways by pasture farming: in the saving on wages and in the increased profit on wool. Thus not only were the small farmers themselves deprived of their holdings, but the farm labourers found themselves *without employment*, the houses of these

unfortunates were therefore torn down, and they themselves were cut adrift from the means of earning a livelihood at the only trade they knew, their few acres of land around their cottages being added at once to the great pastures that were formed. Employment in the country was decreasing, whilst men anxious for work were increasing every year. Notwithstanding all attempts to stop this removal of the people from the land, the change went steadily on from this time forward.

All authorities of the period combine to lament the mischief which was being wrought. The change which had taken place by the middle of the sixteenth century would be incredible, but that we have irrefragable testimony as to what had been already done. Latimer and Sir Thomas More, Harrison and Ascham are all of one mind in regard to the injury suffered by the people. In place of the well-to-do yeomen of the previous period there was an ever-growing population of needy folk. Husbandmen thrust out of their own or cozened into forced sales, houses swept away, towns and villages decaying.* Sheep flourished in

* Massinger's Sir Giles Overreach, in "New Way to Pay Old Debts," shows clearly how large properties were made:—

"I'll buy some cottage near his manor;
Which done I'll make my men break ope his fences,
Ride o'er his standing corn, and in the night
Set fire to his barns or break his cattle's legs;
Then trespass draw on suits, and suits expenses,
Which I can spare, but will soon beggar him.
When I have harried him thus two or three years,
Though he sue in formâ pauperis, in spite
Of all his thrift and care he'll grow behindhand.
Then with the favour of my man at law,
'll pretend some title: want will force him
it to arbitrament; then, if he sell
e value, he shall have ready money
s his land."

placid stupidity where but now thousands of men had lived in ease and abundance and happiness. So serious had this become that in 1533, the 25 Henry VIII., an act was passed denouncing the accumulation of farms, declaring that this system had reduced "a marvellous multitude" of people to poverty. It further stated that ten to twenty thousand sheep could now be seen on a single farm, and the statute ordained that no man should keep more than two thousand sheep except upon his own land, or rent more than two farms. This is the act referred to by Bacon. Like others before and after, it had not the slightest effect: accumulation of land still went on. Well might a husbandman be made to exclaim, "Marry these enclosures do undo us all, for they make us to pay dearer for our land that we occupy, and causeth that we can have no land to put to tillage; all is taken up for pasture either for sheep or for grazing of cattle; insomuch that I have known of late a dozen ploughs within less compass than six miles about me laid down within these seven years, and where threescore persons or upwards had their livings, now one man with his cattle hath all. Those sheep is the cause of all our mischief, for they have driven husbandry out of the country, by which was increased before all kinds of victuals, and now altogether sheep, sheep, sheep." Production for the profit of the landowning or large farming class was taking the place of that production for immediate use which had hitherto been in vogue. If sheep bring in more money than men, away with the men.

But all this was not done without producing the gravest discontent. The risings which occurred between 1536 and 1568 may be classed under two heads—those which arose from religious bitterness consequent upon the Reformation

and the suppression of monasteries; and those which had their origin in the enclosures and expropriations already spoken of, together with ancient grievances—such as the lingering in some districts of the claims on bondsmen—which still remained unredressed. But such separation is more in theory than in practice, for in most cases all the discontents were combined. The Duke of Somerset in his letter to Sir Philip Hoby, sums up these movements very fairly from his point of view. Admitting that the causes of the disturbances are various and uncertain in the different camps of the insurgents, he adds (August 24, 1549, ten years after the suppression of the monasteries), "Some crieth, pluck down enclosures and parks. Some for their commons. Others pretendeth religion. A number would rule another while, and direct things as gentlemen have done." The main reason of all the troubles which came was beyond doubt the heavy pressure upon the mass of the people during the entire period of Tudor domination. Before considering these the last organised efforts of the English people to keep hold of their own land, it is necessary to deal briefly with the most wholesale and unjustifiable robbery that has ever been committed upon them.

The lands of the Church were, at the accession of Henry VIII., of an extent not less than one-third of the kingdom. But they were held in great part in trust for the people, whose absolute right to assistance when in sickness or poverty was never disputed. What useful and even noble functions the priests and monks, friars and nuns fulfilled in the middle age economy have been stated in the last chapter. Universities, schools, roads, reception houses, hospitals, poor-relief, all were maintained out of Church funds.

the retainers who were dismissed after the Wars of

the Roses were in great part kept from actual starvation by these conventual establishments and the parish priests. Not a word was heard against them in high quarters, barely a sputter of ridicule came up from the people against the Church, until Henry VIII. wanted to form an adulterous if not an incestuous marriage in the first place, and to get possession of this vast property in order to fill his purse and bribe his favourites in the second. Abuses no doubt there were, but the object which the king had in view was plunder, and when booty is in the wind it should go hard indeed but king and barons between them would make out every monastery in the realm to be a den of iniquity and every abbess the keeper of a hotbed of harlotry. As to the whole infamous plot from the beginning to the end, it is almost enough to say that the heroes of the business were Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell, the victims More and Fisher. The manner in which our middle-class history has been written is evidenced by the strenuous attempts made to whitewash the pander and the rogue, and to belittle the philosopher and the patriot.

But what we have to do with is the effect of the action of the Defender of the Faith upon the condition of the people. Of course when the seizure of the Church lands was determined upon, no thought was taken of the interests of the people in general, or of those of the tenants on the estates in particular; the monasteries, priories, and nunneries were destroyed, the tombs of the most illustrious of old times defaced, and the buildings, or such portions of them as were left, became merely quarries for building materials. Their inhabitants, the monks and nuns, priests and friars, were turned out on to the world to swell the ranks of the have-nots. More vagrants, more needy, more

miserable, were added to the lack-land population, and those might think themselves fortunate who, instead of lingering for years in starvation, were more rapidly disembowelled or tortured to death.

Now, if all this had been done in order that the lands held by the Church should be resumed by the State for the use and benefit of the whole population, due provision being made for the maintenance of the fifty thousand monks and nuns in the monasteries, and the persons dependent upon them, if the evils which had undoubtedly arisen had been corrected, even sharply and cruelly, nothing could have been urged economically to any purpose against this action, sad as its results must have been to those who were deprived. But, as it was, the property was taken from men who used it in great part for public advantage to be held by those who then and ever after have used it against the interests of the people. Admitting to the fullest extent—as who save Catholics would not admit?—the need for shaking off the yoke of Rome, a far heavier yoke was substituted in its place. The last hold of the English people on their soil was torn off for the benefit of a clique of oppressors. Thus the poor who had ever obtained ready relief from the Church, the wayfarers who could always find food and shelter in the religious houses, the children of the people who repaired to the convent for guidance and teaching, were deprived at one fell swoop of alms, shelter, and schools. This great and powerful estate, which naturally sided with the people against the monarch and the aristocracy, now became a means of oppression in the hands of the landowners and the middle-class. Rack-renting and usury were henceforth sanctified instead of being denounced, and the Protestant Reformation became

a direct cause of the increasing misery of the mass of Englishmen.*

* The advantages which the nation derived from their revenues being transferred to noblemen were still more problematical. The revenues of monastic bodies (whose institutions and modes of life obliged them to reside where the presence of a landlord is most wanted) were usually consumed within a large circle of tenants, and offered a ready vent to the commodities of neighbouring markets. Church lands in the hands of noblemen were still shackled with the *mortmain* (if I may use the expression) *of family settlements;* and their produce was generally consumed by absentees. The abbots were most indulgent landlords, and their tenants found to their cost that (after their fall) their rents were raised while they had not the same facility in disposing of the produce. The money was spent in the capital, and the farmers living at a distance were exposed to all the oppressions of the new masters or to the still greater rapacity of their stewards.—Eden, "State of the Poor," vol. i. p. 97. Eden, it may be observed, was a Tory, a churchman, and a disciple of Adam Smith. But on this point the reader may compare Lingard, a Catholic priest; Hume, a free-thinker; and Cobbett; Alison, another Tory, follows on the same side. Eden even goes so far as to assert that the interests of the landlord and the State always coincide! Our modern huckster economists never cease to assert that the interests of the capitalist and the State always coincide. The people will, perhaps, make themselves heard by and bye.

Latimer in his sermons ascribes the increase of the price of provisions to landlords raising their rents. He says, "To much cometh this monstrous and portentous dearth made by man, notwithstanding God doth send us plentifully the fruits of the earth mercifully contrary to our deserts, notwithstanding too much which these rich men have causeth such dearth that poor men (which live of their labour) cannot with the sweat of their face have a living, all kind of victual is so dear, pigs, geese, capons, chickens, eggs, &c.; these things with other are so unreasonably enhanced." Again, he says, "My father was a yeoman, and had no lands of his own, only he had a farm of three or four pound by year at the uttermost, and hereupon he tilled so much as kept half-a-dozen men. He had walk for an hundred sheep, and my mother milked thirty kine. He was able and did find the king a harness with himself and his horse, while he came to the place that he should receive the king's wages. I can remember that I buckled his harness when he went to Blackheath field. He kept me to school, or else I had not been able to have preached before the king's majesty now. He married my sisters with five pounds, or twenty nobles a-piece, so that he brought

The suppression of the monasteries and seizure of the Church lands consequently redoubled the mischiefs resulting from the enclosures and the growth of sheep-farming, and we are now in a position to understand the serious insurrections which were due to this long list of robberies. The chief risings before the suppression of the monasteries were the Lincolnshire rising and Aske's rebellion, or the pilgrimage for grace to the commonwealth in 1536. After the suppression came the Devonshire rising, and Kett's rebellion in Norfolk, which both took place in the same year, 1549, and were followed twenty years later by the insurrection of the Northern Earls. The Devonshire insurrection was put down by Lord Russell, who employed foreign troops for the purpose of shooting, torturing, and disembowelling his own countrymen.* The house of Russell, it is needless to add, had very good reasons for thus treating those whom they had robbed and whose lands—the lands of the people of England—their descendants hold to this day. Patriotism in the mouths of our English aristocracy nearly always means the best chance of fleecing the mass of their fellow-countrymen.

The men of Devonshire, there is no doubt, were partly actuated by religious feeling. But Kett's rising in Norfolk, inasmuch as, according to the evidence of Kett himself and of Queen (then Lady) Mary, it was a purely civil rising to obtain

them up in godliness and fear of God. He kept hospitality for his poor neighbours. And some alms he gave to the poor, and all this did he of the same farm. Where he that now hath it, payeth sixteen pound by the year or more, and is not able to do anything for his prince, for himself, nor for his children, or give a cup of drink to the poor."—See Eden, vol. i. p. 100.

* It is worthy of note, how at all periods the rulers of this country have relied upon foreign troops to crush freedom. Compare Cobbett.

by force redress for social grievances, is the disturbance which most fully explains the general movement. The troubles began towards the year 1536, and were fomented by men of means, some of whom were executed. Agitation went steadily on from that time forward, and in the year 1540 John Walker of Griston boldly counselled an appeal to arms, suggesting the removal of certain landowners as a beginning: "Let us kill them, yea, even their children in the cradles; for it were a good thing if there were so many gentlemen in Norfolk as there be white bulls." A proclamation was issued by Edward VI. in April 1548 against the propagators of false rumours, and in June of the same year a proclamation against enclosures was issued, complaining that on this account "The force and puissance of the realm which was wont to be greatly feared of all foreign powers is very much decayed, the people wonderfully abated, and those that remain grievously oppressed." The old story again in short. A commission was appointed for the Midland Counties, but did no good.

The insurrection in Norfolk began in June 1549, and Robert Kett, the leader of the people, was himself a man of substance, though a tanner. The grievances against the nobility and gentry, of which they complained, were thus set forth in plain speech:*—"Compare our respective positions: all power is in their hands, and they so use it as to make it unbearable; while nothing is left for us but the extreme of misery. As for them, they abound in luxuries; they are surrounded with all sorts of plenty; they, when they are jaded with pleasure, are roused from their state of weariness and languor by the violence of their avarice, and the fierce-

* Kett's "Complaints," Russell, p. 98.

ness of their lusts: while as for us, what is our condition? We are half dead with the severity of our labours; we have in deed and in truth to eat our bread in the sweat of our brow, and our whole lives are spent in nothing else than undergoing all the evils of hunger, cold, and thirst. And who will say that this is not a wretched and unworthy state of things? and most wretched and unworthy it undoubtedly is; but, bad as it may be, we could have endured it if the gentry, besotted with pleasure and puffed up with pride, were not continually casting in our teeth, 'What pitiful creatures these poor wretches are.' This then is what we find fault with, and it is such treatment as this that we complain of. Urged on by their proud and haughty spirit, and either too idle or too careless to mind what they are doing, they actually make sport of our sufferings—a circumstance which, as indeed it ought to do, inflicts such pain upon our minds, and brings such disgrace upon our good name, that nothing worse can be mentioned, nothing more unfair can be endured. Again, take the conditions on which we may hold land: they are evidently of a shameful character, and more fit for slaves than for free men. We *may* hold it, it is true; but on what terms? just as it suits the will and pleasure of some great man. But let an unhappy wretch offend one of these high and mighty folks, and what becomes of him then? why, he is stripped, deprived, and turned out of everything. How long are we to submit to this? How long is so overbearing a spirit to remain unpunished? Moreover, they have now arrived at such a height of cruelty and covetousness, that not content with seizing everything, and getting all they can by fraud or force to spend it on pleasure and effeminate indulgences, they have sucked the very blood out of our

veins, and the marrow out of our bones. The commons which were left by our forefathers for the relief of ourselves and our families are taken from us; the lands which within the remembrance of our fathers were open are now surrounded with hedges and ditches, and the pastures are enclosed so that no one can go upon them. The birds of the air, the fish of the sea and all the fruits so unsparingly brought forth by the earth, they look upon as their own, and consequently use them as such. Nature, with all her abundance and variety, is unable to satisfy them, and so they think of new sources of enjoyment, such as sauces and perfumes, surrounding themselves with delicious scents, mixing sweet with sweet, and seeking on all sides whatever may gratify their desires and lusts. But what is the condition of the poor all this time? What is our food? Herbs and roots, and thankful may we be if, by incessant labour, we can get even these. Thankful! that we may, for they are vexed we can live and breathe without their leave; yes, they are vexed we can breathe the common air, or look up to the glorious sky without first asking and obtaining their permission. We cannot any longer endure injuries so great and so cruel; nor can we, without being moved by it, behold the insolence of the nobility and gentry: we will sooner betake ourselves to arms, and mix heaven and earth with confusion, than submit to such atrocities. Since nature has made the same provision for us as for them, and has given us also a soul and a body, we should like to know whether this is all that we are to expect at her hands. Look at them and look at us: have we not all the same form? are we not all born in the same way? Why then should their mode of life, why should their lot, be so vastly different from ours? We see plainly

that matters are come to an extremity, and extremities we are determined to try. We will throw down hedges, fill up ditches, lay open the commons, and level to the ground whatever enclosures they have put up, no less shamefully than meanly and unfeelingly. We will not submit to be oppressed with burthens in spite of ourselves, nor undergo such disgrace as we should be labouring under, if by growing old in suffering these evils, we left to our posterity the State full of wretchedness and misery, and in a much worse condition than we had found it. We will therefore leave no stone unturned to obtain our rights, nor will we give over until things are settled as we wish them to be. What we want is liberty, and the power in common with our so-called superiors of enjoying the gifts of nature: it is true our wish may not be gratified, but this one thing is certain, our attempt to obtain it will end only with our lives."

Kett, who was adored by the common folk, was very successful at first; but being encountered by the Earl of Warwick with trained foreign* troops, was defeated at Norwich on August 28th, 1549. Kett and his brother were taken and hanged after a mock trial; many of his followers being slain. One great result of his rising was to put Queen Mary on the throne; another and more important result was that his partial success, and the fear of similar disturbances after the rebellion of the Northern [illegible] enabled the establishment of the Poor Law many years [illegible] As regards immediate advantage to the poor, this

* [illegible] hired foreign troops to put down risings of free Englishmen was copied at a later period by the use of the like [illegible] down the rising of free Englishmen in America. [illegible] employed foreign soldiers to reduce their country-[illegible] patriotic capitalists use cheap foreign labour to the

rising, as well as that of the Northern Earls twenty years after, was of no avail. The condition of the people went constantly from bad to worse.

For other causes were working at the same time to impoverish the labouring population. Henry VIII. debased the currency to a fearful extent, the effect of which was to prevent wages from keeping pace with the rise in prices of food and clothing, especially as competition for employment was now becoming very severe among the needy. The discovery of America and the conquests of Mexico and Peru, with the great influx of the precious metals into Europe which followed thereupon, told in the same direction. Wages increased but little, certainly not more than fifty per cent. on the average from the middle to the end of the sixteenth century; the price of necessaries of life during the same period, say 1550 to 1600, considerably more than doubled. This alone is enough to prove what destitution must have prevailed. The husbandman's wages became, as Kett says, hardly sufficient for subsistence, and the only people who profited were the large landowners who produced for sale; the large farmers with long leases, who must have accumulated capital rapidly, seeing that rent and wages both in reality fell, whilst the corn, wool, and hides which they exchanged all rose in price; and the commercial and employing classes in the towns which were now rising to importance.

Now also were brought to bear those fearful statutes against vagrants, and laws for the regulation of the hours and wages of labour, which, together with the laws prevent-

ubination, slowly forced all workers alike into the

the class owning the means of production. The

the great cities suffered at this time almost as

much as their unskilled brethren in the country districts. The history of the laws against vagrants is worth following in this connection as showing conclusively how the landless class were regarded as criminals. Sturdy beggars were not unknown in England even in the most flourishing times, and it was against such specimens of the Edie Ochiltree class that the preamble to the Statute of Labourers was probably directed, which, although speaking about "many seeing the necessity of masters and great scarcity of servants, will not serve unless they may receive excessive wages," yet mentions that others are "rather willing to beg in idleness, than by labour to get a living." Such beggars from choice there will probably be in every state of society until thorough physical and mental education has been carried on systematically for several generations.

But in 1494, after the dismissal of the retainers, vagrancy became to thousands not a matter of choice, but of necessity. The first of the series of statutes is that passed in 1494, 11 Henry VII. cap. 2. Parliament seemed to imagine that the vagrants were still men and women who could get work if they would, and wandered from their respective parishes out of sheer perversity. Accordingly the stocks and whipping at the cart's tail were the portion of all able-bodied vagrants who, after being punished in this way, were to be sent back to their birthplace to set to work "as true men ought to do." In 1530, the aged and worn-out mendicants were given licences to beg, but in regard to sturdy beggars whipping and imprisonment were still the penalties, and they were then obliged to take an oath to go back to their late place of residence, or to their birthplace, and set to work. This, when it was precisely the want of work that forced them to roam. In 1535 it was, in fact, found out that

the "valiant vagabonds" thus sent back, duly fustigated, could still get no work to do. Parliament therefore increased the punishment, and ordained that in case of a first backsliding, the offender should have another sound flogging and half his ear cut off; the second relapse he was to be treated as a felon, and executed out of hand. But in 1547, eight years after the final suppression of the monasteries, whilst the enclosures were going on at a fine rate, and two years before Kett's rising, as the beggars still rapidly increased notwithstanding the "godly acts and statutes" just mentioned, another was passed of the most atrocious character, showing, as Thornton remarks, how genuine the distress of the poorer classes must have been, which even such infamous measures could not induce them to conceal.

By this Act of 1547 it was laid down as law that every able-bodied loiterer should be branded with a hot iron and handed over as a slave to the person who denounced him. Thus if an employer wanted a slave to work for him, he had only to drag the first vagrant he met before a magistrate, and his need was supplied. The slave might be kept on bread and water, and refused meat or good nourishment of any kind; he might be compelled to undertake the most filthy tasks by means of flogging or other torture. If he ran away for a fortnight he was condemned to perpetual slavery, and to be branded with the letter S on his cheek and on his forehead; if he ran away again, death as a felon was his doom. His master could sell him, bequeath him, or let him like a horse or a mule. Death is the punishment of slaves who "contrive aught against their masters." When one of the vagabonds is caught on the roads by the public officers he is to be branded with the letter V on his chest, and brought back to his birthplace, where he must work in chains

on the public works. If a vagrant gives a false birthplace be becomes a slave of the municipality, and is branded again. His children become the apprentices of the first-comer who wants them—the lads to the age of twenty-four, the girls up to the age of twenty. If these poor creatures take to flight they then become—see the inducement to render the apprenticeship an unbearable tyranny—slaves to their masters, who may then put them in irons, whip them to their heart's content, put rings round their necks, and the like.

In 1572, under the reign of "good Queen Bess," similar infamies were enacted. Unlicensed beggars over fourteen years of age were to be severely flogged and branded on the left ear if no one would take them into service for two years. If they begged again, all over eighteen years of age were to be executed unless some one was ready to employ them for two years. Caught a third time, death was the penalty without relief. There were other statutes of like import. In the reign of James I. all who beg are declared vagabonds. Justices of the peace, to wit landowners, manufacturers, parsons, and so forth, who have the right of adjudicating on criminal matters, are authorised at their ordinary sittings to have such vagrants publicly whipped, and to give them six months of prison on a first relapse, two years on the second. During the whole period of imprisonment they may be had out and flogged as often as the magistrates think advisable. Flog, brand, brand, flog, enslave, starve, enchain, execute—such is the pretty treatment thought beneficial by the rising capitalist class, such their idea of free-trade in labour. These statutes of James I. were only repealed in 1714, and one portion ordains that if a poor devil branded with the letter R, in token of having

been caught once, is found begging again, he is hanged without benefit of clergy.

Nor, let it be supposed that these frightful laws were allowed to remain a dead letter. Hollinshed states that seventy-two thousand vagrants were despatched in the reign of Henry VIII. alone. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth sturdy beggars were hanged in batches strung together in long rows like flitches of bacon. Not a year passed but several hundreds were hauled up to the gibbets. Needless to add that enslavement and torture went on merrily the while: only the residuum whom the capitalist-farmers, and manufacturers could not make immediate use of were thus disposed of. But let us hear once again from the noble Sir Thomas More how these poor creatures came to be thus helpless. After mentioning the injury done to the commonwealth by noblemen and gentlemen, yea, and by certain Abbots who "leave no ground for tillage, they enclose all into pastures, they throw down houses," he proceeds, "Therefore that one covetous and insatiable cormorant and very plague of his native country may compass about and enclose many thousands acres of ground together within one pale or hedge, the husbandmen be thrust out of their own, or else by coveyn and fraud, or by violent oppression, they be put besides it, or by wrongs and injuries they be so worried that they be compelled to sell all: by one means, therefore, or by other, either by hook or by crook, they must needs depart away poor, silly, wretched souls, men, women, husbands, wives, fatherless children, widows, woeful mothers with their young babes, and their whole household, small in ıce, and much in number, as husbandry requireth ıds. Away they trudge, I say, out of their known ıtomed houses, finding no place to rest in. All

their household stuff, which is very little worth, though it might well abide the sale, yet being suddenly thrust out, they be constrained to sell it for a thing of naught. And when they have wandered about till that be spent, what can they then else do but steal, and then justly, pardy, be hanged, or else go about a begging. And yet then, also, they be cast into prison as vagabonds, because they go about and work not; whom no man will set a work though they never so willingly proffer themselves thereto. For one shepherd or herdman is enough to eat up that ground with cattle to the occupying whereof about husbandry many hands were requisite. And this is also the cause why victuals be now in many places dearer. Yea, besides this, the price of wool is so risen that poor folks which were wont to work it, and make cloth thereof, be now able to buy none at all. And by this means very many be forced to forsake work, and to give themselves to idleness." *

Here the whole process is once more described. Driven from their homes, deprived of the means of production, hunted down as vagabonds, executed as felons, free Englishmen were at the mercy of anyone who chanced to want "cheap labour." Even the most fortunate could but sell their force of labour to those who owned the means of production at a miserable wage. Different, indeed, was the lot of these labourers from that of their fathers in the previous century. Then the wage-earner was really independent. His position was secured by economical and social arrangements alike in country and in town. Now the capitalist farmer was becoming absolute master in the country, whilst in the towns competition and labour-laws slowly established the domination of the mercantile man and the manufacturer.

* More's "Utopia," Introduction.

These historical and economical causes and results are closely intertwined. The very events which turned the cultivators and peasants into mere wage-earners, and their means of living and of working into elements for capital to use, furnished the capitalist also with a home market. Each peasant or yeoman family produced, and themselves for the most part consumed, the food and raw material, the fruits of their own labour. Now these products became saleable commodities, which were sold in large quantities by the farmers to the manufacturers. On the other hand, as Sir Thomas More shows, the common stuffs formerly worked up by every peasant's family were now gradually replaced by manufactured goods which were sold in the country, and the number of isolated workers producing on their own account were concentrated under the command of capital. Domestic industry was by degrees crushed down, and a home market created for the manufacturers' goods. Here is only the early stage of this great change to full capitalist production which has developed into the total separation of classes in our own time. But the social revolution from the happy days of the fifteenth century was sufficiently complete by the reign of James I. Thenceforward the absorption of wealth by one class at the expense of another went on unchecked.

From the middle of the sixteenth century, however, various small attempts had been made, simultaneously with the blood-thirsty legislation summarised above, to provide some sort of relief for those who, on returning to their own birth place, were still unemployed. In 1535, as a pendant to the atrocious statute enacted in that year, the parish authorities were ordered to collect voluntary contributions to employ the "valiant vagabonds" who had been driven back from their wanderings, as well as to relieve the sick and

worn-out. In 1562 these voluntary contributions were found quite insufficient to supplement the flogging, branding, and mutilation which formed the principal recipes in the shape of poor relief, and the parishes (5 Elizabeth cap. 3) were given power to force persons to pay who refused to give anything of their own accord. Ten years later, beggars and vagrants being still as numerous as ever, the parish authorities were empowered to tax all the inhabitants for the relief of the poor.

There were other similar acts in addition to these; for paupers and vagrants literally swarmed the country, and even in London the Queen herself actually gave authority for martial law in the metropolis and neighbouring counties, to have such persons executed on the gallows and gibbet. In short, to such a pass had matters come, that in 1601, the 43d year of Elizabeth's reign—the actual wealth of the country having increased greatly, though owing to the new system of production "over-population" had come about—it was absolutely necessary to make some general and solid provision for the poor if they were not to be exterminated outright. Accordingly the famous Poor Law of 1601 was enacted, which laid down regular ordinances for the relief of the poor, the maintenance of the indigent being charged upon the land, and payment of poor-rates enforced by summary process. Thus was pauperism established by law, the people having been robbed of their lands, common lands and church lands alike, and driven like beasts into the highways. Thenceforward till now we have had the able-bodied paupers at one end of the social scale balanced by the able-bodied sybarites who produce them at the other. The pro-

poor was insufficient and wretched, the laws

tual slavery of the needy to the rich, the

accumulation of wealth was fostered in every way; still it was at last recognised that a man or a woman born in England had a right to live, however miserably, in the land of their birth at the expense of those who had taken unto themselves their entire means of support. The agricultural labourer had become a serf without land, the legislature had succeeded in enforcing laws which had been in operation with regard to wages for two hundred years, and pauperism became the workers' last refuge.

It is the rule to say that the position of the craftsmen was much better than that of the agricultural labourer, inasmuch as by the limitation of apprentices, competition was considerably restricted. This is to an extent true in certain trades, but even here the possibility of having a lad for bare food up to the age of twenty-four induced many employers to infringe the rules. Nor must it be forgotten that combinations among workmen—as we shall see more clearly in a later chapter—were expressly forbidden by law until far on into the present century. Moreover, the craftsmen became more and more capitalists, and confined the brotherhood of the craft-guild to those who could afford to pay very handsomely for the privilege.* The restrictions also became more numerous, and constant endeavours were made to turn the handicrafts into the monopoly of a few families controlling journeymen who worked for competition wages, and could never become masters. Masters and wardens under Henry VII. were admonished by law on this head, and in 1530, when an attempt was made to raise the fees for apprentices to 40s., the law cut them down to 2s. 6d. on becoming an apprentice, and 3s. 4d. on becoming a member of the guild. Other enactments were passed, but

* Brentano, p. cxlix.

to so little avail that the prices of apprenticeship rose to a preposterous height, and the difficulties offered to them on the road to becoming masters were almost insufferable. These abuses gave rise to grave discontents, and Lord Bacon speaks of some of these craft-guilds as "fraternities in evil." Already, too, the possession of considerable capital had begun to be necessary in the higher branches of manufacture, which of itself not only made it harder for the apprentices to become masters, but gave rise to a distinct antagonism between master and workman in place of the fellowship and good feeling supposed to prevail in the craft-guilds when they were founded. This change of the craft-guilds into associations of capitalists "exercised of course also an influence on their government; and it appears altogether natural when, in the sixteenth century, we see that government entirely transferred into the hands of the richer guild members."*

Instead of the old sovereign meeting of all the associates there now appeared a Court of Assistants, who governed the guild. Only the richer masters were admitted to the highest division, the Livery. The journeyman soon ceased to have any right of election. In short, the domination of the employers became paramount to the guilds, and no attempt to restore the old democratic character of the charters met with full success. To the apprentices aud journeymen all this seemed by no means natural however. In Germany, France, and Flanders, the workers were organised at this time far better than in England, and certainly the Flemish cities were in the sixteenth century considerably ahead of our own in all that goes to make up the organisation and wealth of a manufacturing and trading community. The increase of competition from the country and from abroad

* Brentano, cli.

could not be met here in such shape as to be effectual, though downright riots against foreigners certainly occurred. On the whole, therefore, it is clear that the artisans of the cities, especially in those branches of trade which were already controlled by masters with considerable capital, suffered heavily from the fall in wages due to the causes mentioned, and the rise in the price of the necessaries of life due to the debasement of the coinage and the influx of precious metals from America.

Manufacture in the shape of simple co-operation, where, that is to say, several workmen worked together in one workshop at various tasks, was now increasing. This business belonged to, and was controlled by the employer. Kett's insurrection had much thrown back Norwich as a manufacturing centre, but London and other towns took up the work, and the real impetus given to our home manufactures during the sixteenth century is hard to estimate. Circumstances could scarcely have been more favourable to the development of a class of capitalists, and the instant they obtained influence, they of course laughed "freedom of contract" to scorn, and used the legislature to lengthen hours of work and cut down wages for their benefit. Just as the sixteenth century, and especially the period covered by the reigns of Henry VIII. to Elizabeth created a miserable body of agricultural labourers in the country, so the destruction of the democratic character of the craft-guilds, and the growth of capital coupled with the crowding in of the people driven from the land, formed a comparatively small, but still a definite unprotected wage-earning class in the towns. We can directly trace the rise of our distressful proletariat to the robberies, the cruelties, and the legislative infamies recorded.

The craftsman like the labourer was more and more severed from his means of production, more and more compelled to sell his labour as a mere commodity to others, in whose workshops he worked, and whose materials he employed. We have fairly entered on the period of production for profit to the employer, rather than for use to the producer, or those dependent on or—as the old feudal lord or abbot—superior to him. Personal relations have been sapped: money relations are being substituted. On the one side the trading class, on the other the working class, is now organizing itself, but in the meanwhile the former has fully two centuries of struggle to go through before it becomes complete master of the situation.

The farmers and the landowners who farmed for profit became during this period possessed of the capital which they needed in order to change the whole relations of production in the country. The rise in the prices of wool and raw produce simultaneously with the reduction of rents on long leases, and the lowering of wages owing to the fall in the value of the money, did the business: a large and growing profit remained therefore for a number of years in the farmer's hands. To understand the accumulation of the capital which started manufactories, large trading houses, and banks in our cities, we must take a wider survey, though part of the city capital came doubtless from the same source as the farmer's.

From the date of the discovery of America by Columbus, and the doubling of the Cape of Good Hope by Vasco di Gama, the Atlantic Ocean has played a part in European commerce similar to that held by the Western Mediterranean and the shores of Britain in ancient times. At the same time that these great discoveries were made, the ancient

route to the East was practically blocked by Ottoman conquest and domination. Constantinople fell in 1453, and the destruction of the Byzantine Empire gave, as is well known, a great impetus to art and learning in Western Europe. But it was the endeavour to find a new route to the "Indies"* which led Columbus to America, and the actual discovery of such a route by Vasco di Gama rendered Europe independent of the Turks. By 1520 this horde of disciplined savages was in possession of Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, and Arabia. As a result, commerce languished in the Eastern Mediterranean to the lasting injury of the great trading republics of Italy, where commerce, manufacture, and banking first obtained any important development in modern times. It was not therefore the discovery of the new route alone, but the ruin of the old one which induced the rising adventurous peoples of the West to make connection with India by way of the Cape; whilst the success of the Turk compelled the Venetians and Genoese to seek fresh markets further afield and afloat. But important as was this great change in the centre of the commercial world, it was of course as nothing in comparison with the discovery of America, the conquest of Peru and of Mexico, and the direct trade which began with Hindostan. †

* Columbus almost certainly learnt of the existence of a continent to the west from Iceland.

† There were many reasons for this great expansion of foreign commerce which followed so quickly. In 1554 the Russian Company was founded, in 1562 the slave-trade commenced, 1566 the Royal Exchange was built, in 1579 the Baltic Company was founded, and in 1581 the Turkish Company, in 1600 the great East India Company was chartered. The usury laws at home had something to do also with this eagerness for foreign trade; the special advantages granted by the entire mercantile system to external dealings helped; but above all, a greater market was offered beyond sea without going to the expense

A few dates will, I think, make the extraordinary extension of the mercantile and political horizon during the lifetime of a single generation more easy to grasp than a long exposition.

America discovered by Christopher Columbus,	1492
Newfoundland and Florida discovered by Sebastian Cabot, ...	1497
Cape of Good Hope rounded by Vasco di Gama, ...	1497
Discovery of the Brazils, ...	1499
Conquest of Cuba by Diego Columbus, . .	1511
Conquest of Mexico by Cortez, . . .	1521
Conquest of Peru by Pizarro, . . .	1531

Thus within a short life-time the whole aspect of the world was changed alike to the philosopher, the mariner, and the merchant. It was as if in our own day the planet Venus were brought into direct connection with our earth, its continents with the inhabitants, and their treasures laid bare to exchange or robbery on our part.

Spain and Portugal reaped the first harvest gathered in by greed and cruelty from the luckless dwellers in the New World. The horrors inflicted on the Peruvians and Mexicans, the infamous slavery which soon grew up by importation from Africa, were a fitting foundation for the edifice of capitalism. Millions of treasure flowed into Europe from the Indies of the West. America took the place of the Gold Coast and

and trouble of making and repairing roads, which was greatly needed for the development of the home market after the destruction of the monasteries. This last cause has never been sufficiently considered, but it exercised an enormous influence upon our whole economical development up to the end of the eighteenth century.

the East as the chief producer of the precious metals; the markets of the world began to take the place of the limited market of the country itself or its immediate neighbours. Gold and silver attained an importance in men's minds which they had never before reached, but which they still to a large extent keep. A sort of fetichism encompassed around these symbols of imperishable riches: *they* were real wealth, all else could but be figured forth in their value as in a mirror. It was an age of wonder and credulity. The imagination had full play in all the phenomena of trade and in all the marvels of travel; but the hard reality of merciless robbery and murder entered into the souls of those who worked, whether they were the evicted vagrants wandering scourged and branded through English lanes, or the helpless slaves of Peru or Mexico forced by torture to wear themselves to death in the mines in the hopeless endeavour to gratify the cupidity of their inhuman masters. Such was the begetting of our industrial capital; its development has been worthy of the morality which presided over its conception and delivered the hopeful progeny.

For England was not long to leave Spain or Portugal the leadership in the race for wealth. With the destruction of the Spanish Armada, our buccaneering sea-dogs and bold circumnavigators began to assert the full right of Englishmen to share in the plunder of the New World. Raleigh and Hawkins, Drake and Frobisher knew no finer sport than to make prey of a rich Spanish galleon. Piracy had full swing on the Spanish Main, and the Spaniards, those master robbers ashore, met more than their match afloat. But all this led rapidly to the spread of English commerce. In 1577-80 Drake circumnavigated the globe, the gallant exploits of Raleigh are well-known, Newfoundland received

its first lot of colonists in 1500, about eighty years before, the first English settlement in India was made about forty years later, in 1612. These brief statements show an activity unprecedented for ages. No wonder that English ports began to rise in importance, and English trade to develop. Bristol, whence Cabot had set sail on his famous voyage, became only second to London in the wealth and enterprise of her merchants ; the Devonshire harbours shared in this commercial prosperity.

Spain, at the time of the conquest of Mexico, was beyond question the first power in Europe. The Moorish kingdom of Grenada had fallen in 1492, and thus masters at home, in control of Flanders, with a hand on Italy, and the riches of America pouring into their lap, the Spaniards might look forward to a long leadership in the great development of the near future. Portugal also advanced greatly in wealth. But the real struggle for the supremacy of the seas and Colonial Empire lay between England, Holland, and France. And the groundwork of England's ultimate predominance was laid by the men who broke the pride of the Spaniards, and forced their right to trade and colonise in the so-called Spanish Main.* Foreign goods became more

* Spain herself, however, helped to strengthen her commercial enemies by the short-sighted and barbarous policy which, in deference to religious bigotry, she pursued towards the most industrious and intelligent of her subjects. Her cruelty towards the Moors of Grenada as well as towards the Protestants of the Netherlands not only reduced her own population, but in the case of the persecuted Flemish and the Walloons, supplied England and Holland with numbers of wealthy manufacturers, who brought their capital away with them, and skilled artisans who had the knowledge of their trade. Thus an impulse was given to English manufactures in the sixteenth century by the bigotry of the rulers of Spain similar to that which was given in the seventeenth century by the bigotry of the rulers of France in revoking the Edict of Nantes. England thus owes almost as much to the blunders of her

and more common in our markets, foreign raw materials began to be imported and worked up by English hands. On all sides the machinery of a great commerce was being developed, on all sides the great idea of wealth grew to be profit by exchange or downright seizure—the enslavement of blacks in one region, the enslavement of our own countrymen, as in our crimping system to the colonies, in another—of the work and goods of others. The sacred rights of property in land were founded upon the most infamous robbery of the peasantry of their own : the sacred right of property in goods, houses, and money was based upon the wholesale robbery of the fruits of other men's labour.

To sum up the whole. Under the rule of the Tudors England changed from a country where in the main the mass of the people lived on their own land, were happy, contented, well-fed, and well-clothed, producing and working up enough food and raw material for their own use, and thinking little of exchange, into a country where people were gradually being driven off the soil, their ancient rights destroyed, their means of production and land taken by others and exchange for profit was becoming the rule of the time ; a property-less folk compelled to work for the farmer's profit, or forced to compete against one another in the cities for wages to keep body and soul together, replaced to a large extent the sturdy yeomen, craftsmen, and labourers of old days. Pauperism became an integral portion of the English social system, and the lot of the many one never-ending servitude under the guise of freedom. Meanwhile the landlords, farmers, traders, and manufacturers

rivals as to her natural geographical position, and the vigour and enterprise of her people. The effect of the influx of the manufacturers and artisans from Flanders was soon felt.

grew wealthy, the name of England was made great in Europe, the foundations of our commercial preponderance and naval supremacy were laid. England was still in the main an agricultural country, and so continued for another hundred and fifty or two hundred years after the death of Elizabeth. But already the first and most difficult steps had been taken towards the formation of that great capitalist England, which some consider to be the acme of human civilization and advancement.

During this century also, most useful discoveries and inventions were made, from which the growing commercial and manufacturing powers derived the first and the largest benefit. In astronomy, Copernicus and Tycho Brahe extended the field of human knowledge with the happiest results even in practical affairs. Book-keeping by double entry, decimal arithmetic, and other improvements were introduced, and, according to some authorities,* the stocking-frame was invented in an improved form at Cambridge. Thus everything tended to help on the new economical period, and to secure to England one of the first places at least in the new era. The change in the method of production, though still in its infancy, was by itself of the highest importance. Instead of the isolated labourer, we have henceforth an increasing number of wage-earners working together under one employer, who himself owns the means of production, and takes the product. This was a necessary step to bring about fully that social labour which is essential to all production upon a large scale. But it gradually shuts out, more and more, from the workman the chance which he had before of becoming an employer himself. He works now for the profit of a class

* Anderson, vol. ii. p. 3.

above him, and the capitalist becomes a capitalist not because he is an organiser of labour, but, on the contrary, becomes an organiser of labour because he is a capitalist, and wishes to make the capital which he has obtained profitable to himself.* Hence the tendency slowly manifested is to increase the scale of operations, the size of workshops, the number of men employed by one master, and consequently of course the amount of capital needed to start on good terms with others, to build workrooms, to purchase raw materials, &c. This is, strictly speaking, the time of simple co-operation, which leads directly to organised handicraft by division of labour, though the one speedily blends with the other, and in practice no separation by a clear line is possible. What follows is in any case an economy in the means of production, which necessarily enriches the employing class alone when they alone own those means.†

To begin with all this is only distinguished from the simple handicraft of the Middle Ages by the larger number of workers who are employed together on the same identical task, thus saving certain expenses; but very soon a radical change in the very nature of the work done takes place, by dividing the labour into portions, and splitting up the trades. This commenced in England in the sixteenth century. Consequently commerce first, and then manufactures, greatly increased by the influx of foreign capitalists and labourers, combined with exploration and piracy to give England her initial advantages in the competition for commercial wealth

* The language of the Statute, 43 Elizabeth, is a clear proof that the business of agriculture began now to be carried on by persons of capital.—Eden, p. 7.

† Marx, "Capital."

which followed. Usury laws, protective duties, monopolies, and so forth, were the expiring efforts of the old Middle Age polity to cope with this new international growth, and prevent it from benefiting one class alone. They had little permanent effect. The Elizabethan age, with all its glory, was the Iron Age for the mass of the English people.

CHAPTER III.

THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS.

At the death of Queen Elizabeth, England was the rising power of Europe. Disastrous as her reign had been to the multitude, there could be no dispute as to the regard in which this country was held abroad at the close of her long administration. The bitter struggle with Spain and the Papacy had ended completely in her favour; Ireland had been subjugated by vigorous and sustained effort; commerce had extended beyond all anticipation, the trade with the Netherlands alone having increased forty or fifty-fold; consequently when James I. ascended the throne, England was stronger in every respect than she had been at any previous period. Scotland was henceforth no longer a dangerous enemy in the event of foreign war, but a close and most serviceable friend; wealth abounded in the metropolis to such a degree that purely commercial considerations began to exert great influence in our foreign policy; nor could it be said that the campaigns of Gustavus Adolphus and the religious conflict throughout Europe were in any way harmful to this country.

During the reign of Elizabeth, Protestantism became finally the religion of the people of England and Scotland. This is essentially the creed of a trading community; keen competition for individual gain or loss in this world is supplemented by keen competition for eternal happiness or

damnation in the next.* The Church of England, with the calm indifference to anything but personal advantage characteristic of its founders, was equally ready to crop the ears of Puritans or to stretch recusant Catholics upon the rack; though such was the fanaticism of the hot-gospellers, that in any attack upon Romish heresies the Anglican divines could always rely upon the support of those whom they had just outraged.

The period of Tudor domination in which absolutism to a great extent replaced the feudal system, had strengthened the power of the Crown to all outward appearance. Some nobles had been bribed into submission for the time by large slices of the plunder of the Church, others who rose against the authority of the monarch were racked and gibbeted into quiescence. Thomas Cromwell was the English Richelieu. But the new landed aristocracy, whether nobles or squires, the new trading class, goldsmiths, manufacturers, or merchants, though ready enough to join with the Crown in oppressing the people, were nowise inclined to put up with much tyranny at their own expense. Even Queen Elizabeth, at the height of her popularity with these classes, found that out, and took care to remain on good terms with them at a temporary sacrifice of her own wishes. The first Stuarts, however, quite failed to understand that the House of Commons was the representative of the growing strength of the middle class in town and country, and were unable to see that Protes-

* Was there ever a better argument against a State Church than this of Petty's? "A third branch of the public charge is that of the pastorage of men's souls and the guidance of their consciences; which one would think (because it respects another world *and but the particular interests of each man there*) should not be a public charge at all in this."

"but the particular interests of each man there" seems to me a satire.

tantism meant that religion was, as usual, being twisted to sanctify results already attained in the field of material development. Thus the doctrines as to the endless extent of the royal prerogative, and the right divine of kings were destined to come full butt up against the hard facts of the time, to the grave inconvenience of many who stood behind them. James I. wished to be as masterful as his son, but he did not carry his theories so far, nor had the time arrived for such thorough resistance.

To give even a slight sketch of the English Revolution and Civil War would lead far beyond the limits of this work. Unfortunately, the history of that memorable time, like that of all English insurrections and revolutions, has been written by members of the two contending factions; in the main, the middle-class view has had the predominance, as was to be expected in such a society as ours. How the people regarded the struggle between King and Parliament as to which should have the right to control the wealth they created, we know little; but there is evidence enough to show that the opinions of Ball, Tyler, Cade, and Kett, the high ideals of More and Ascham had not wholly faded from the minds of those who worked, or of those who thought. The pamphlets and flysheets, the ballads and satires, prove that below the Civil War between the partisans of King and Parliament, lay deep discontent with both the contending factions among the mass of the people.

The lower order of Puritans, Levellers and Fifth-monarchy men, mingled with their strange religious doctrines ideas which were the direct forerunners of those held by the Anarchist propagandists of our time. Those who sought refuge in America from persecution at home bore with them, whether rich or poor, the opinions as to liberty, equality, and

fraternity, which, though never yet fully wrought out even in the United States, reacted upon Europe more than a century later. In England, the Civil War resulted first in the dictatorship of Cromwell, and more remotely in the accession of William III. Elsewhere, it spread views which had afterwards far-reaching effects, by no means exhausted in our own day. But England had now entered upon the period of the mercantile system and commercial wars. Though Holland and the Netherlands were the first important capitalist powers in Northern Europe, basing their wealth and strength almost entirely on commerce and trade, France after the decadence of Spain became our only formidable rival in Europe and throughout the world. But in order to appreciate the external policy, the internal condition of England during the seventeenth century must be briefly dealt with.*

* "This century may be truly said, from its very commencement, nearly to approach to a resemblance of modern times, whether considered in a commercial or a political light; either in respect of riches, knowledge, or religion. In general, it will be seen that towards the close of the commerce gradually advanced to almost its very zenith of perfection. mathematical, manufactural, nautical, and mechanical arts; architecture, and plantations are marvellously improved.— of the several kingdoms of Europe are more intimately and better understood than in any former age.—Almost commercial, banking, and metallic companies of Europe are nearly as at present subsisting: the great and principal commerce of England and Holland is effected.—The their trade more and more to the Dutch and English. naval strength begins to decline.—The trade from the of Europe to the East Indies is brought to great maturity English and Dutch, who to the very close of this to possess much the greatest part of the naval —Naval architecture is also brought to great perbalance of national commerce is better underobably, it will never be reducible to a direct treaties between different nations are

In the sixteenth century the English peasantry were, as has been seen, in the most deplorable condition. There is little doubt, indeed, that though poverty, within certain limits, tends to favour generation, these limits had been passed altogether prior to the enaction of the poor laws. The misery was such that the population had actually decreased at a time when the wealth of the nation as a whole had increased. Circumstances now changed somewhat for the better in regard to the rural population; they could scarcely have gone on without ruining the country.

more fully comprehended in this century, and are found to be of the last importance to their mutual prosperity.—The importance of the low interest of money and the true intrinsic value of coin is much better and more generally known than at former periods.—Many new inventions and projects are set on foot.—The suburbs of London are greatly enlarged every way from the great increase of the commerce of England.—Legal interest of money in England is reduced.—The excellent navigation act of the Rump Parliament is afterwards legally confirmed as being founded on just principles, and various improvements are at different times made therein.—Many excellent new productions are brought to England and naturalised there.—England's most excellent Royal Society, for the improvement of natural knowledge, is established and followed by those of several other nations.—The revenue of England is vastly increased, as is also its royal navy and mercantile marine, and likewise all its manufactures.—New English plantations formed in America, and the old ones much improved. France also is greatly improved in commerce, manufactures, colonies, and shipping.—Many unsuccessful expeditions are attempted from Europe for finding the north-west and north-east passages to China and India. Money banking takes its original establishment and increase in England; and commercial liberty is also firmly and legally established there.—France by the united and impolitic persecution of her Protestant subjects makes great alterations in favour of the commerce and manufactures of most countries of Europe. Peter, the first great monarch of Russia, makes vast improvements in his extensive empire.—And almost every part of Christendom towards the close of this century is endeavouring to push into commerce and manufactures; whilst at the same time the commerce and shipping of England continue very visibly to prosper and increase."—Anderson's "Origin of Commerce," vol. ii. p. 198.

But that very growth of the towns which was the result of improved manufacture and trade, as well as of the depopulation of portions of the country districts, created in turn a demand for cereals, which raised the price of corn and rendered tillage again profitable, and reduced the sheep demesnes within more reasonable limits.* Hence an augmented demand for agricultural labourers which, together with the operation of poor relief for the really necessitous, gave the mass of the people a better subsistence.

The mischief, however, had been done. Those cottages which were now built to house the labourers had no land around them as they had in the days of Fortescue: even the commons were, as we have seen, greatly restricted, boon as they still were to poor. Consequently the cottager was a mere wage-earner, and his wages, though nominally greater by as much again as those of the labourer with his own land to fall back upon, represented a very different return in all from that of his predecessor two or three generations before. "The price of wheat rose in a hundred years from six or seven shillings to thirty shillings a quarter, and in the year 1610, 4$\frac{3}{4}$d., or about a penny less than a whole sheep had once cost, was given for a pound of mutton." † Throughout the seventeenth century in fact, although the infamous tyranny against vagrants was somewhat mitigated, the position of the agricultural labourer was bad, and population had begun to increase. In 1622, the country is described as "pitifully pestered with poor and lusty labourers, who, because no man would be troubled with their service, begged, filched, and stole for their maintenance." Sir Matthew

*sult on a larger scale took place at the end of the y.

†Over-population," p. 197.

Hale, according to Eden's "State of the Poor,"* writing about 1660, fully confirms this statement, saying:—"There are many poor who are able to work if they had it, and had it at reasonable wages by which they could support themselves and their family, which often-times are many. These are not within the provision of the law, and if they come for exhibitions they are denied, or, at least, have but very small, and such as cannot support them and their families." After urging the danger of the neglect of such a matter, even to the well-to-do classes themselves, he proposes the erection of workhouses for employing the poor, "and for lodging material, and for instructing children in the trade or work." Sir Matthew had special reference to the wool trade. But the manufacturers of the seventeenth century had no greater desire to see national workshops and well-regulated industrial schools upset their profit-mongering system than the manufacturers of the nineteenth century have.

By the preamble of a statute of 1662, 13 Charles II. cap. 12, the necessity, number, and continual increase of the poor is dwelt upon. Again, the annual produce of the poor-rates at the end of the seventeenth century was from £600,000 to £900,000, the total population of England and Wales being then six millions, and in the year 1697 one-half of those relieved were able-bodied, and could have maintained themselves if they had had work.

Yet the general industry of the kingdom was exceedingly flourishing. At no previous period had commerce and manufactures flourished more vigorously, whilst the introduction of the turnip husbandry and artificial grasses gave, at the same time, a great impetus to agriculture.† Doubtless

* Eden's "State of the Poor," vol. i. p. 216.

† Thornton, p. 199.

also, the population was increasing, though in a far less ratio than the general wealth of the nation. But just as the Wars of the Roses failed, during their continuance, to injure the solid well-being of the yeoman class, so the Civil War between King and Commons, aristocracy and bourgeoisie, in the seventeenth century failed to raise permanently the depressed condition of the agricultural labourer—though, during the brief supremacy of Cromwell, the people seem to have been better off, and towards the end of the century matters again improved somewhat, so far as their standard of life was concerned.

A political struggle, however bloody, political writing, however eloquent—and who will ever forget the noble pamphlet on the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing?—affect not at all the relentless economical pressure below. Let those who will, talk of freedom of speech, freedom of person, freedom of contract; what are all these mock liberties worth to those who have but the freedom to starve or turn paupers? What do the names of Milton or Defoe, Eliot, Hampden, or Cromwell, mean to the poor bowed-down hind, forced by the economical conditions of his time to stumble along half-clothed and half-fed from his pauper cradle to his panper grave? History is regardless of him, the political economist passes by on the other side, whilst the misery of yesterday furnishes forth the misery of to-day, and the dispossessed vagrants of the Tudors and the Stuarts hand on their heritage of squalor and suffering to the hopeless proletariat of the nineteenth century.

The capitalist farmer system of culture with the agricultural labourer divorced from the soil at the bottom, and the poor-relief as a necessary makeweight, was now in full course of development into the organised trinity of landlord,

tenant-farmer, and labourer—the sleeping partner, the active partner, and the freedman serf, who provides the value, and bears all burdens—with which we are so well acquainted. The rural economy, though later to undergo some variation in consequence of the introduction of machinery and enlargement of the sphere of operations, was, in fact, settled for some generations. Enclosure of commons, seizure of public lands, evictions of small freeholders, went steadily on. The landowners succeeded in shifting from their shoulders on to the mass of the community those charges of military service which they had first compounded for at a considerable money payment, and then had themselves reduced to a mere nothing. William III., that worthy hero of the whole huckster school, gave away Crown lands, which he had no more right to dispose of than he had to sell the Crown jewels, to his greedy Dutch followers.

It was in the year 1660 that the great landholders shook off the feudal obligations which they owed to the Crown, and by means of which the government had been carried on. These feudal dues amounted to about 25 per cent. upon the total annual value of their holdings, and by clearing themselves of them they became in reality, though never by law, or according to right, landowners instead of landholders, depriving the nation of its own land in their favour by an Act of Parliament—a self-gratifying ordinance indeed—passed by themselves. The revolution of 1688 followed, which crippled the power of the Crown, and got rid of the ancient custom of payment of members of the House of Commons for their services. This was followed in turn by the abolition of annual Parliaments in 1702, and the Septennial Act in 1716.*

* It is this which gives to all English radical movements such a strange aspect of having their origin in the past.

Thus, by a succession of enactments, the territorial aristocracy under Whig guidance became masters of the country. The establishment of a permanent standing army, and the introduction and extension of the wasteful and injurious funding system, rendered long wars on a large scale possible to an extent never before dreamed of, and have taxed future generations beyond what, at first sight, any man would have believed it possible that they would put up with. Singular to say, the old Tory or country party vigorously withstood both standing army and national debt or funding system, but without avail; and their successors are to-day the stoutest champions of both. The full effect of the funding system, and the manner in which the country has been plundered by it for the benefit of the upper and middle classes, will be dealt with separately; but it is sufficient to note here that it placed an overwhelming power of mortgaging the prosperity of future generations, and of bribing inconvenient agitators in the hands of the aristocracy and commercial classes.

All this was of a piece with what had gone before, and in fitting accord with what followed after. English land had ceased to belong to the English people, and from the reign of Henry VII. the concentration of "real estate" in fewer and fewer hands seemed to be the great object alike of the landlords and the legislature. Nor do we find throughout these long years of knavery and insidious oppression, one single organised rising by the people to recover the property of which they had been robbed. A [illegible] of injury is not recorded in history. [illegible] numbers of the poor made no difference, [illegible] never forced them to take counsel with [illegible] should overwhelm their masters. At

most, a village riot, or the burning of a few hay-ricks, testified that a landlord was unpopular or a farmer too grasping. Neither during the great Civil War nor during the disturbances created by the Pretender in the following century, did the English agricultural labourers show the slightest sense of the fact that their fathers had owned the land out of which they gained a bare subsistence, or that their labour was that which supported the farmer and the landlord alike. This apathy has continued among them until the present generation. So true is it that successful revolutions are never wrought by the mere needy—that economical changes work on almost independent of human action until the time is ripe for a complete reorganisation.*

In the towns the economical development proceeded in some respects more slowly than a superficial view of earlier events might have led us to expect. The craft-guilds which had previously exercised much influence as a popular force,

* It is never possible to *make* a revolution; it is only possible when a revolution has already begun in the existing conditions of a society, to give it outward legal expression and consequent accomplishment. To wish to make a revolution is the madness of foolish men who have no idea of the laws of history. Equally foolish and childish is it to attempt to stave off a revolution which has once developed in the bowels of a society, and to withstand its legal expression. ["Arbeiter-Programm," by Ferdinand Lassalle, p. 15.] It were to be wished that our English politicians, no matter how they label themselves, would learn wisdom from these sentences, and study the history of their own country a little more closely—especially the history of popular movements and working class combinations. As a far greater thinker than Lassalle once said to me, "You English are like the Romans in many respects, but in none more than in the forgetfulness of your own history." Lassalle deserves the highest credit for the work he did in Germany. Marx and Engels did the scientific work of Socialism, but they, neither of them, had the faculties which enabled Lassalle to stir the working classes throughout the German-speaking territories. The influence of Marx and Rodbertus on Lassalle, though he never fully acknowledged his indebtedness to the former, was very great.

became almost entirely capitalist in form under the Stuarts, and were freely bled of their wealth in return for additional privileges by the king and the Commonwealth. But they helped in their turn to overthrow those monopolies granted by the Crown to individuals which weighed so heavily upon the middle-class. There was, in fact, a rivalry going on all the time between the gentry who had grown up out of the break-down of the feudal system and the powerful trading class which had likewise risen to importance at the same time. But apprentices were still limited, and rules as to wages were constantly enforced. The limitation of apprentices in the trades helped to form a body of artisans with common interests, which at times they defended in turbulent fashion enough.

So long as the famous Statute of Apprentices* indeed was in force which gave a definite position to apprentices and journeymen these were secure of continuous employ-

* The preamble to the Statute of Apprentices, 5 Elizabeth, c. 4 (1562) shows clearly that the object was to protect the people, however imperfectly it may have served that purpose at times :—"Although there remain and stand in force presently a great number of Acts and Statutes concerning the retaining, departing, wages and orders of artificers, servants and labourers, as well in husbandry as in divers other mysteries and occupations; yet partly for the imperfection thereof that is found and doth appear in sundry of the said laws, partly for the number of them, and chiefly for that the wages limited and rated in many of the said Statutes, are in no part answerable to this time respecting the [illegible] belonging to the said servants and labourers frequently without the great grief and hurt of the poor lived man be put in good and due execution of course to the Statute of [illegible]. Much the capitalist [illegible] for the great grief and [illegible]. They never wearied of

ment at fair wages, the wages as well as the hours of work being regulated by the magistrates, and by no means invariably in the interest of employers. Everywhere the State interfered between master and workman, between producer and consumer, between shipowner and seamen. All these minor interferences underlay a great system of protection of home industry, alike against foreign workmen and foreign goods. Meanwhile, organized handicraft, with division of labour, was taking the place of the family industry, as well as of the simple co-operation under the control of a master. The limited production possible under these two methods, could not suffice for the extended markets of India, China, the Colonies, as well as the home market now laid open to the trading class. The head of the craft-guild or corporation was supplanted by the middle-class man, and the division of labour between different corporations disappeared gradually before the division of labour in the workshops themselves.*

Throughout this economical period, which extends from the beginning of the seventeenth to nearly the end of the eighteenth century, or about one hundred and eighty years, the three divisions of production, family industry, organized handicraft, and cottage industry were going on simultaneously.† But manufacture by division of labour was all the time gaining ground on the others, and production, as has already been shown, was now carried on not for the immediate use of the producers and their neighbours, but with a view

* Communist Manifesto, 1847.

† [illegible]ld, p. 541. It is well worth remark that not even Marx nor [illegible]riter has given us a *history* of the development of organized [illegible]division of labour. From Petty to Adam Smith is a [illegible]lopment, but manufacture never dominated family and [illegible]r.

to a market which was ever expanding and in which underselling with a view to gain had already become the rule. "It is manifest that they who can in forty-five millions undersell others by one million (upon account of natural and intrinsic advantages only) may easily have the trade of the world."* This passage, written in the reign of Charles II., proves that by the middle of the seventeenth century an economist could speak of the "trade of the world" as an empire to be conquered by the cheapest producer, with the assurance that he would be understood by his readers.

But Sir William Petty gives us besides a brief and distinct account of the advantage of that division of labour which found its chief expounder in Adam Smith more than a century later. He says, "in the making of a watch, if one man shall make the wheels, another the spring, another shall engrave the dial-plate, and another shall make the cases, then the watch shall be better and cheaper, than if the whole work be put upon any one man." Here we have at once the whole story. The difference between this and mere simple co-operation is plain. Bringing together a number of work-people to produce an article or a number of articles does not necessarily involve this minute division of labour in the first instance. We know in fact that for a long time after workmen were engaged under one employer who found the raw materials, the workshop, and disposed of the completed goods, each could, as a rule, carry out himself almost every portion of the business, though he might from choice devote himself to one portion in particular. With the pressure to produce goods cheaper, or which practically amounts to the same thing, more rapidly and with less expenditure of toil, division of labour came in and gradually

* Petty, p. 222.

extended to every portion of the work. The commodity thus became the social product of a group of workers, each of whom carried on day in and day out the same trifling operation. In papermaking, pinmaking, &c., a similar division goes on as in watchmaking.

"There are consequently two sides to the development of manufacture from the craft. On the one hand, the starting point is the combination of different and independent crafts — such as wheelwrights, glaziers, tailors, joiners, &c., to make a carriage—which are separated and simplified to such a point, that they are only partial operations in the production of one and the same commodity; on the other hand, organised handicraft takes hold of the co-operation of workers of a similar class, decomposes the same craft into its different operations, isolates them and renders them independent of one another to the point where each of them becomes the exclusive business of an individual worker. Manufacture, therefore, sometimes introduces the division of labour into a craft or develops it; at others it combines distinct and separate crafts together. Whatever the starting point, its definite form is the same—an organism for production whose members are men. But manifestly the dexterity of the worker in the handling of his tool is the ground on which the whole is based, and a worker in this system is chained to one petty operation his life through.*

* In the progress of the division of labour, the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labour, that is of the great body of the people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations; frequently to one or two. But the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments. The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations of which the effects too are perhaps always the same, or very nearly the same

There are two advantages now obtained, the original one from simple co-operation and the added gain of division of labour. Already the social character of labour has become very pronounced ; the worker is a portion of an organised group which, on a larger or a smaller scale, according to the trade, has to be reproduced in order to carry on the operation ; and the more devoted he is to one detail, the more narrow and incomplete, that is to say, he is as a man, the more perfect is he as a portion of this human machine. A hierarchy of labour is also formed, and skilled and unskilled labourers are distinctly divided. This was the character of the system of production which developed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries contemporaneously with the growth of capitalism, which was its essential complement. The workman in manufacture works not only under the direct control of the capitalist, but what he produces is not in itself a useful article until combined with some other

has no occasion to exert his understanding or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. . . . Of the great and extensive interests of his country he is altogether incapable of judging ; and unless very particular pains have been taken to render him otherwise, he is equally incapable of defending his country in war. The uniformity of his stationary life naturally corrupts the courage of his mind, and makes him regard with abhorrence the irregular, uncertain and adventurous life of a soldier. It corrupts even the activity of his body and renders him incapable of exciting his strength with vigour and perseverance in any other employment than that to which he has been bred. His dexterity at his own particular trade seems, in this manner, to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues. But in every improved and civilised society this is the state into which the labouring poor, that is the great body of the people, must necessarily fall, unless Government take some pains to prevent it. Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations." Improved and civilised society indeed ! Adam Smith saw more than some of his disciples have.

bit of incomplete work. The result of one man's labour becomes in fact the starting-point of the next until the whole is put together as a commodity for exchange. Each individual labourer thus has nothing which he can call his own, nothing which he can claim as having been absolutely produced by him, or out of which he can demand a definite share. Here we have a method of production for the purposes of exchange which is directly due to capitalism as a system, and which would be useless without such an extended market, and such general exchange as had now become possible. Here, too, we have the socialised arrangement of production carried a step farther and authority in the workshop partially enforced whilst the ownership and disposal of the product rests with the individual capitalist.*

The markets which were meanwhile being opened to English trade and English manufacture demand also more than mere passing consideration. Economically, socially, and politically, this portion of our history is of the utmost importance to the correct understanding of the great industrial revolution which has made England for the past three generations the workshop of the world. Mention has already been made of the increase of English commerce with the Netherlands and European nations generally, as far in excess of that of other countries in proportion to her population or previous trade. England in fact now began to derive direct advantage from her remarkable geographical position,† and the natural turn of her sons for the sea; the discoveries and settlements made by other peoples were partly by colonisation, partly by war, rendered more bene-

* Marx "Capital," p. 146.

† The coast line of Great Britain is four times that of France, a much larger country.

ficial to us than to them. North America, the West Indies, and India, rapidly assumed that place in English commerce which, with some slight variation, they have ever since retained.

Sir Walter Raleigh's hopeless endeavours to found a colony on Roanoke Island in 1584 and in subsequent years led eventually to the settlement of Virginia, and it is noteworthy that in James I.'s incoherent and contradictory instructions to the adventurers the community of goods is provided for. It was, as originally set afoot, a most chaotic scheme, and the promoters saw in their visions gold, silver, and precious stones, where there was but a rich soil, an admirable climate, and some rather rough competition in the shape of the most savage tribes of Indians on the coast. The usual ill-success and misery followed for the pioneers; but by the date of the great Civil War Virginia had become a successful, and in the main thoroughly democratic colony, though the introduction and development of slavery together with the wealth the slaves created caused later a division of classes and brought about the enaction of most barbarous laws. Tobacco was from the first a most profitable crop, though the speculative manner in which it was grown showed the colonists thus early the evils of over-production. Later, Maryland, and North and South Carolina followed in the path of prosperity, after similar periods of trouble at the start, and slavery became a definite portion of the colonial system.*

The profits of the African slave trade, indeed, not only to America but to the Spanish settlements, were enormous throughout these times, and the business was almost entirely

* Henry C. Lodge, "A Short History of the English Colonies in America," p. 68.

done in English bottoms. From the time when Sir John Hawkins began the nefarious traffic until it was put an end to in the nineteenth century, there was probably no portion of English commerce which gave such vast revenues in return for the capital embarked. The gain arose both ways, from the large sums which good negroes fetched on the plantations, and the readiness of the buyers to pay for them in valuable produce rather than in specie. Many a great mercantile and trading house owes its first success to the profits derived from the horrors of the middle passage, and many an impoverished noble helped to restore his fortunes in the same nefarious way. It was the introduction into modern production of the old system of forced labour side by side with the nominal free labour of the competition wage-earner. That it increased the wealth of America and the West Indies far more rapidly than would otherwise have been possible, cannot be doubted any more than that it greatly strengthened the position of the English capitalist class by the profits they shared; but slavery both directly and indirectly, hindered the growth of democratic feeling in America itself.* The sale of indigent whites imported from the mother country seemed a small matter to men who had been accustomed to trade in negroes.† The Southern States necessarily developed into an aristocracy of great landowners, dependent almost exclusively upon agriculture, the whole social fabric resting upon slave labour, owned and controlled by the ruling class. Their influence,

* "Lodge," p. 181.

† Of these white slaves, so late as 1744 it is the fact that "their masters were at liberty to whip them; they were punished with additional years of servitude if they ran away; no one could trade with them; and their travel was strictly limited." In South Carolina at this date there were 100,000 African slaves worked literally to death.

both before and after the Declaration of Independence, was unfavourable to freedom, even in the limited bourgeois sense, and manual labour was considered degrading.

Further north, however, more important communities were being formed, alike from the trading and the political point of view. "The history of Massachusetts begins in an obscure Lincolnshire village among a company of plain farmers and simple rustics, who had separated from the Church of England, and paid for their temerity by bitter and unceasing persecution." These settlers, too, had terrible struggles at first, but Massachusetts is in the main typical of the colonies of the north, where, though labour was held in regard and the most democratic form of Government was chosen, the pressure of wealth began later to be felt. But the main points in connection with English development are that the trade of the slave and the free states of Carolina, Virginia, Puritan New England, and Quaker Pennsylvania was, after free trade had been declared by the Dutch settlers of New York, almost exclusively with England; that the emigration of such vigorous, free, equality-loving men as the northern settlers from the mother country—though their cruelties to the Indians were as inexcusable and as horrible as the slave-trade—seriously checked the growth of democratic ideas at home; and that the foundation of such a colony side by side with French settlements, necessarily involved the extension of the commercial war with France to America.

Even in the seventeenth century clear-headed men saw that there would be grave difficulty in retaining the New England settlements, so great was the difference in the form of government. But for more than a hundred years the colonies were exceptionally loyal to the British connection,

and afforded a most profitable outlet for English manufactures in return for raw produce.

The same with the West Indies. Jamaica was taken in 1655, and from that time the English influence and commerce in those seas was only second to that of the Spaniards. Similar progress was made in India. The first charter was given to a company in 1600, and from that date until the great struggle for supremacy in the East with France the trade grew apace. In 1612 factories were first established at Surat. So early as 1683 a £100 share sold for £500, and apart from the territorial domination which followed after the success of the East India Company, Indian commerce formed a powerful factor in that increase of wealth which was pouring into England from all quarters. Nor is it altogether out of place to remark here, in view of recent legislation, that at the commencement of our closer connection with India her calicoes were kept out of our markets on the ground that the admission of these cheap commodities, however beneficial to the consumer, would infallibly derange our whole industrial system, and throw our workers out of employment. England had the start of France in the eastern trade, though until the outbreak of the war between the two powers in 1746 French influence in the native courts was certainly not inferior to our own, and the genius of her ambassadors was superior. Calcutta became our possession, however, in 1698, the direct trade between the East India Company and China having commenced about twenty years before. Thus the great geographical discoveries were rapidly turned to advantage in the East as in the West; piratical attacks upon Spanish galleons and treasure-ships being supplanted by the more profitable ventures of trade, colonisation, and slavery.

Such extension of commerce and manufacture necessarily brought with it a wider system of banking and credit than could be carried on by goldsmiths or isolated Jew money-lenders, and the headquarters of the European money market were now gradually transferred from the shores of the Mediterranean to Amsterdam, Paris and London. The Bank of England itself was not established until 1694, but prior to that date various banking houses gained celebrity, and had made considerable advances to the Government for war or other purposes. Hence arose the funding system, whose pernicious effects were not fully felt until much later. At the close of the seventeenth century the total amount of the National Debt amounted to no more than five millions sterling, but the principle of borrowing had been introduced, and eminent historians have even been found to declare that it is a great advantage for a country that the labour of its working population should be heavily mortgaged to the luxurious classes of our own and other nations to pay for wars waged in the interest of the very classes who lent the money. The development of credit, though resulting here and there in such fiascos as Law's Mississippi Scheme in France, and the South Sea Bubble in England, coupled with the banking and funding system, served still more to strengthen the growing power of capital in the towns.

All held together, alike above and below. Large landowners were increasing in the country, large capitalists in the towns; protection of industry went hand in hand with laws against vagrants, and laws against combination; commercial tariffs led unavoidably to commercial wars, the plan of our ancestors to pay for their own fighting was replaced by an elaborate succession of drafts on posterity; the people

became nothing, the land-owners and rich merchants everything in the economy of our country. Gradually the fetichism of money, which is in full domination even to-day, reached such a pitch that the balance of trade was commonly taken to mean that the country which exported bullion must necessarily be the poorer for it. Exchange for profit, interest on money lent, had become the ruling principles of English life to such an extent that the aristocracy which held political rule from the end of the Civil War were impelled to a foreign policy which was really dictated by the trading class, and strengthened its influence. William III. was essentially a mercantile monarch, and he handed on his ideas to his successors, or rather he and they were impressed, like their statesmen, by the surroundings of the time.*

Some of course there were who saw below this artificial system which had obtained control of England, who understood that labour applied to natural objects is the sole source of wealth, and the necessary basis and measure of the exchange value of all goods, who therefore wisely held that any method of production or any laws which injured the well-being of the mass of the people could not be beneficial to the country at large. But these were even then in a minority, and influenced by the pressure around them. The two most eminent economists at the end of the seventeenth century were Sir William Petty, already quoted, and John Bellers, and their opinions form a singular comment upon the intelligence which has guided

* The great war of the Spanish succession and later wars were directly due no doubt to Dutch or German interests having too much influence here; but the long struggle between ourselves and the French was unavoidable when once the competition of national trade had commenced.

our development for the last two hundred years. Petty himself was a doctor, and a most successful man of business; but he was under little delusion as to the origin of his wealth, and probably saw much more than, as a courtier and man of the world, he thought it well to publish.* His analysis of the currency question is still the basis of all correct writing on that troublesome subject. Yet he was in the main a middle-class economist, who held that rich and poor must ever exist, and that those who wished to bring about more equal conditions were either fools or knaves. The more noteworthy are the clear statements, which run through his works, as to the real groundwork of political economy. Thus in his inquiries into the basis and measure of exchange-value and price, he says, speaking of the relative value of corn:— "How much English money is this corn or rent worth? † I answer so much as the money which another single man can save within the same time over and above his expense, if he applied himself wholly to produce and make it; viz., Let another man go travel into a country where is silver, there dig it, refine it, bring it to the same place where the other man planted his corn, coin it, &c., the same person all the while of his working for silver gathering also food for his necessary livelihood, and procuring himself covering, &c. I say the silver of the one must be esteemed of equal value with the corn of the other; the one being perhaps twenty ounces, and the other twenty bushels. From whence it follows that the price of a bushel of this corn to be an ounce of silver." Again, "If ‡ a man can bring to London an ounce of silver out of the earth in Peru in the same time that he can produce a bushel of corn then

* His manuscripts, I understand, show this.

† Political Arithmetic, p. 29. ‡ P. 38.

one is the natural price of the other; now if by reason of new and more easy mines a man can get two ounces of silver as easily as formerly he did one, then corn will be as cheap at ten shillings a bushel as it was before at five shillings a bushel, *cæteris paribus.*"

Thus, though Petty admits the right of a man to demand usury, because he stands out of his money for a certain time at the desire of another, still he is every way anxious to diminish the numbers of those who merely transfer or trade upon the produce of others. "If registers were kept of all men's estates in lands, and of all conveyances of, and engagements upon them; and withal if public loan-banks, lombards or banks of credit upon deposited money, plate, jewels, cloth, wool, silk, leather, linen, metals, and other durable commodities were erected, I cannot apprehend how there could be above one-tenth part of the law-suits and writings as now there are." But Petty proposes direct reduction "in the numbers of lawyers, physicians, merchants, and such folk who properly and originally earn nothing for the public" —think of that, you learned brethren of the law, you "organisers of labour" and the like—"being only a kind of gamesters who play with one another for the labours of the poor; yielding of themselves no fruit at all, otherwise than as veins and arteries to distribute forth and back the blood and nutritive juices of the body politic, namely, the product of husbandry and manufacture." Further, "in case there be no overplus then 'tis fit to retrench a little from the delicacy of others feeding in quantity or quality, few men spending less than double of what might suffice them as the bare necessities of nature."

Nor are his views on the questions of vagrants, beggars, and population less sound. For example, "fewness

of people is real poverty; and a nation wherein are eight millions of people is more than twice as rich as the same scope of land wherein are but four." "Those who cannot find work (though able and willing to perform it) by reason of the unequal application of hands to lands, ought to be provided for by the magistrate and landlord till that can be done; for there needs be no beggars in countries where there are many acres of unimproved improveable land to every head as there are in England. As for thieves they are for the most part begotten from the same cause; for it is against nature that any man should venture his life, limb, or liberty for a wretched livelihood, whereas moderate labour will produce a better." Free schools find in him a ready champion as, "'Tis true that schools and colleges are now for the most part but the donations of particular men, or places where particular men spend their money and time upon their own private accounts; but no doubt it were not amiss, if the end of them were to furnish all imaginable helps unto the highest and finest natural wits towards the discovery of nature in all its operations; in which sense they ought to be a public charge."

Such are a few extracts from the writings of one who has been well called the father of modern political economy, and in a certain sense of the science of statistics. Written more than 200 years ago how little our middle-class economists of the nineteenth century seem to have inherited the clear sense of their great ancestor. One point alone have they fully worked out. "Why," asks Petty, "should we forbid the use of any foreign commodity which our own hands and country cannot produce, when we can employ our spare hands and lands upon such exportable commodities as will purchase the same or more?" That, I say, we settled generally nearly

forty years ago, but with how much more of gain to the "gamesters who play with one another for the labours of the poor" than to the poor themselves, will be seen in due course. Still that the hollowness of the whole mercantile protectionist system should be thus exposed, is sufficiently remarkable at that date.

If, however, Petty represented the clear-sighted, shrewd and witty thinker, who had observed men and affairs as a doctor, a statesman, and a man of business, John Bellers, the quaker, represented the philanthropic socialist, who was partly reproduced a century later in Thomas Spence, but more fully in the noble Robert Owen. In his works will be found not only some of the most luminous thoughts on political economy ever met on paper, but that very proposal for the formation of a Federation of the civilized powers of Europe, which has been claimed as one of Auguste Comte's great ideas a hundred and fifty years later. Bellers, however, was intent upon organising the labourers and the unemployed of his own country to begin with, and not satisfied with merely criticising the shortcomings of the present, laid down a plan of reform for the future. But his proposals for founding what he called a College of Industry, as well as his Essays, are full of views as to the power of men in combination and their rights as human beings, which prove that even in these centuries of darkness and depression for the multitude, some there were both above and below who saw the cause of all the misery, and strove to remedy it by building up a better system from the foundation.

In his Proposals for a College of Industry, Bellers says, "If one had 100,000 acres of land, and as many pounds in money, and as many cattle without a labourer, what

would the rich man be but a labourer. . . . . The increase of the Poor is no burthen (but advantage) because their conveniences increase with them. The poor stand still because the Rich have no money to employ them, though they have the same land and hands to provide victuals and clothes as ever they had, which is the true riches of a nation and not the money in it." * Again he says, "As the world now lives, every man is under a double care besides his bodily labour. First, to provide for himself and Family. Secondly, to guard against the intrigues of his neighbours overreaching him, both in buying of, and selling to him; which in such a college will be reduced to this single point of doing only an easie day's work, and then instead of everybody's endeavouring to get from him, everybody is working for him, and they will have more conveniences in the college than out. In the common way of living on trade men, their wives or children often lose half what they get either by dear bargains, bad debts or law suits, of which there will be neither in the college; and if the earth gives but forth its fruit, and workmen do but their parts, they will have plenty; whereas often now the husbandman and mechanics both are ruined, tho' the first have a great crop and the second industriously maketh much manufacture. Money, and not labour, being made the standard, the husbandman paying the same rent and wages as when the crop yielded double the price; it being no better with the mechanics, where it's not who wants his commodity, but who can give him money for it (will keep him), and so often he must take half the value in money another could give him in labour that hath no money." † He adds, to make all plain, "The rich have no

* Bellers, p. 4. † Bellers, p. 12.

other way of living but by the labour of others, as the landlord by the labour of his tenants [or agricultural labourers], and the merchants and traders by the labour of the mechanics."

In his Essays, Bellers points out, even thus early, how a portion of the nation provided all the wealth, whilst living themselves in poverty, and how, also, more goods are produced than can be bought by the consumers. Thus, "By computation, there is not above two-thirds of the people or families of England that do raise all necessaries for themselves and the rest of the people by their labour; and if the one-third, which are not labourers, did not spend more than the two-thirds which are labourers, one-half of the people or families labouring could supply all the nation," and it is, indeed, "a certain demonstration of the illness of the method the people are employed in if they cannot live by it; nothing being more plain that men in proper labour and employment are capable of earning more than a living."* The mischief lies partly in the faulty distribution of labour, for "with many commodities the market is over-stocked (and what is the best dinner worth to a full stomach), which is the great unhappiness of many of our mechanics, that they make commodities when nobody wants them. And then they pine and starve whilst they are waiting for a customer that will give bread for their manufactures (or money to buy bread), whereas the same labour in husbandry they used in making them manufactures would have raised much more food than the money they got for their manufactures will buy them," and partly from a more serious cause, for, "as traders are useful in distributing, it's only the labour of the

* This proportion has been entirely reversed since Bellers' day. Less than one-third now labour, more than two-thirds live on their work.

poor that increaseth the riches of the nation, and though there cannot be too many labourers in a nation if their employments are in due proportion, yet there may be too many traders in a country for the number of labourers, and then some must fail for the want of trade to support them, from whence they become sharping or distressed, not being used to work, and the nation the poorer by the loss of their labour. Traders may go rich whilst a nation grows poor through extravagancy; for when the dealers may get twenty thousand pounds by claret, the nation pays and spends one hundred thousand pounds for it, and nobody grows rich by drinking it, whatever the seller doth. Land and labour are the foundation of all riches, and the fewer idle hands we have the faster we increase in value; and spending less than we raise is a much greater certainty of growing rich than any computation that can be made from our exportation and importation."

Such are the views, in a few short extracts, of two of the clearest thinkers of the seventeenth century. The infinite drawbacks of the system of production, the development of a heedless individualism, which brought about evils in all ways, are plainly set forth. Here, at any rate, we have no delusions as to the fact that the arrangements of society, not the nature of the case, produce poverty, uncertainty, and glut. Capital had not, as yet, so completely overshadowed the whole firmament of human reason that the wealth of a nation could be confounded with the increasing wealth of a class. The poor, as another writer of the same date points out, might be employed to a greater extent in manufacture; but they remain in the same condition as before, and their number is increased if the manufacture goes on. There is no benefit to the producers in the

enrichment of those who live on the results of their labour without working themselves.

Already the sense that this was so had induced the workmen in several trades to petition Parliament, and to form combinations against employers as far as they were permitted by law. In the seventeenth, and even in the eighteenth century, the old idea that the State and Parliament are responsible not merely for the administration, but for the well-being of the people at large, had not wholly died out. In 1641, the apprentices petitioned against the introduction of foreigners, and when Cromwell abolished the feasts of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide, "and other festivals called holidays," as superstitious observances, and ordained the strict Puritan Sunday, the apprentices petitioned Parliament again, alleging that they "were not only deprived of the benefit of visiting their friends, but also of all set time of pleasure and lawful recreations," and requesting that one day in each month should be set aside for this purpose. Parliament granted the request, setting apart the second Tuesday in every month as a holiday.* This occurred in the years 1646-47, and when the masters attempted to encroach on these days, Parliament ordered all shops to be closed. Evidently the masters, though gaining ground, had not yet fully impressed their ideas of industrial freedom upon the landowners. In 1666 a petition was also presented. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the fixing of wages by magistrates had already been, to a large extent, given up, and the relation between the employers and the employed was coming to be regulated almost entirely by individual contract. This led to constant attempts at oppression by the masters, and gave rise to combinations among the men—

* Brentano, p. clix.

though the relations between the two classes were much better generally under the old rural cottage industry than they have since become. In 1725 such combinations were forbidden in the woollen industry, and the justices were again empowered to fix a fair wage between employed and employer.

Throughout the period which precedes the introduction of machinery upon a large scale, the masters were therefore never fully able to dominate the men, even when they thought themselves in a position to do so easily. Authority was exerted, but if pushed too far, the men revolted and fell back upon the Statute of Apprentices already referred to. Though capital had gained power enormously, those who wielded it were still unable to secure that absolute obedience which in the early days of machine-industry they easily obtained. Labour in manufacture was still partially independent, whatever might be the position of the unfortunate agricultural labourer. Employment of a man seemed to impose some sort of moral obligation upon all but the very worst class of masters. It was when all restrictions imposed by old legislation were removed that tyranny of the most hideous description grew up on the one side, to be met by the formation of a combined aristocracy of labour in Trade Unions on the other.

A Period of transition from the last stage of the decadent craft-guild to that of the first stage of the Trade Union marks the change from organised handicraft to factory industry. The old system had its own means of defence against tyranny for the skilled workmen of the towns; the new has been the growth of our own time, and is now in

* See Report and Minutes of Evidence on the State of the Woollen Manufactures of England, July 4th, 1806.

turn falling into decadence. Strange is it to reflect upon the incapacity of mankind to see the development of the problems of their own period as a whole. Whilst this change, to lead to a still greater change, was being slowly worked in the social relations of the people, the one idea of the legislature seems to have been to revert to ancient usages rather than to control and guide the new growths. Yet the moment was favourable for collective action; for the full antagonism of class interest was only in process of development. Moreover, the population was still in the main agricultural. At the end of the eighteenth century even eighty per cent. of the people still lived in the rural districts. The weavers in the wool and cotton industries were employed in the family and cottage industry, with which they usually combined the cultivation of plots of land which they rented, and were thus not wholly dependent upon mere wages, though they were very indifferent farmers.

The revolt of the woollen-weavers against the masters in 1756, because the justices refused—at the instance of the masters—to fix a fair rate of wages, was almost the last outbreak before the introduction of machinery on a large scale. In this case, the weavers on strike prevented journeymen who were ready to accept the masters' terms, from working, by force; and what is more important still, the masters gave way. A little later, the justices were once more empowered, 29 Geo. II. c. 33, to fix the rate of wages in the woollen trade. Thus the few revolutionary masters were not only unable to dominate their skilled workmen altogether, but the legislature intervened to fix a fair wage. Moreover, the poor-rate was sometimes used in the

eighteenth century to supplement wages, and the tendency of this, as has been conclusively shown, is to raise the standard of life, and in this manner to secure for the whole people a better lot than they would otherwise obtain. In any case, leaving a sketch of the history of the Poor Laws themselves to be given separately, there can be no doubt that the artisans and the small farmers of the latter portion of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, up to the period when the great modern industrial revolution began (about the year 1760), were much better off than their immediate successors, though all the working classes were far removed in prosperity from the golden days of the fifteenth century. Bad as the parish settlement was in many respects, its tendency was to keep up the rate of wages, and the lavish manner in which the Poor Laws were administered, told strongly in favour of the general well-being of the labourers.* Nor between 1630 and 1760 did the population increase more than 800,000, from 5,700,000 to 6,500,000; a truly trifling accession in proportion to the increase in the commerce and power of production meanwhile. After the Civil War, consequently, we may take the well-being of the mass of the people to have somewhat improved, though by no means in proportion to the wealth which was concentrated in the hands of the merchants, manufacturers, and the landowners.

For by the year 1760, or a little later, Great Britain had become the first mercantile and trading power in the world. The great naval struggle with Holland which made the fame of Van Tromp and de Ruyter, as well as of Blake

* This is, as will hereafter appear, a very awkward fact for the malthusians and opponents of State-feeding of the poor.

and Monk, had ended completely in our favour. From the outset, notwithstanding glorious victories and great commercial enterprise, it was apparent the Dutch would have to succumb, nor were our statesmen very scrupulous as to how they achieved or enforced their victory. Our alliance with Holland, also, was really almost as fatal to her preponderance as our enmity. That the continental wars in which William III. and the House of Brunswick involved us were injurious in many ways cannot be doubted. Whether we should otherwise have escaped the burden of a standing army when the well-to-do classes had once made up their minds that fighting was a profession of much honour, but small profit, may be open to question; but we should at least have done without the need for mercenary troops. However, it was not mere aristocratic love of dominion, nor even the position with respect to Holland and Hanover, which impelled our statesmen to the long struggle with France in the East and in the West, prior to the great war of the revolution. It was the real or supposed conflict of trading interest, the growth of the colonial system, the desire to secure the monopoly of Indian commerce, which, to a large extent, forced the hand of the landowners and their Parliament. Walpole, who saw clearly that internal improvement is far more to the gain of the nation at large than doubtful foreign enterprises, no matter how glorious the result of the wars to which they may lead, kept the country at peace for a long period, but the rivalry was too keen to be content with peaceful competition. The control of the world market, meant not merely trade competition, but general predominance. Englishmen looked to the navigation laws to keep up their maritime supremacy in the same way that they imposed

protective duties to foster and strengthen their growing industries.

Even Lord Chatham, who saw as plainly as Walpole the folly of Continental war, was dragged into a long support of Frederick the Great because the "natural enmity" against France forced us to support any enemy of that country. The conflict was in fact inevitable; for the French were as much bent upon the acquisition of mercantile and colonial supremacy as we were, though the present generation has almost forgotten that Canada and Louisiana were French settlements, that some of the finest islands in the West Indies, including San Domingo, were under the French flag, and that Dupleix was in his way a greater statesman than Clive. From the beginning of the seventeenth century, the history of the trade of the world is little more than a history of the development of the English-speaking peoples. At the back of the race hatred between the English and the d—d foreigner stands the hard interest of the trading class. The hypocritical contention that we conquered countries for their good has been reserved for our own sanctimonious money-getters of to-day. Our fathers made no such pitiful pretence. They knew right well that they fought and conquered, intrigued and bribed, protected and undersold for personal advantage and private gain. And they succeeded in every direction, save where they came into collision with men of their own blood. Times of grievous depression and defeat were not unknown; but on the ocean our officers and seamen, our explorers and common sailors, literally organised victory in the long run. So wealthy and powerful was our Empire, that we could even afford to lose the noblest group of colonies the world ever saw.

At the latter half of the eighteenth century therefore,

and just prior to the revolt of the American colonies, the position of Great Britain was far more powerful, relatively to other nations, than it was at the death of Elizabeth. A period covered by three lives of only moderate length carries us back from the England of Chatham, Burke, and Junius, of Dr Johnson, Sheridan, and Arthur Young, to the days of Bacon and Shakspere. Wealth, luxury, and refinement had increased to a marked degree, and the power of man over nature had greatly extended; but England and Wales had but 6,500,000 inhabitants, and the people were still in the main an agricultural community. Nor had their condition much improved. Arthur Young's record shows that the agricultural labourer of England offered no such contrast to the ground-down peasant of France, as his ancestor had presented a few generations before.

The machinery of commerce was being rapidly perfected, and the complete separation of the people from the soil, the concentration of the means of production, capital and credit in the hands of the "upper" classes, had greatly advanced. Already efforts were being made by the capitalists to release themselves from those State restrictions which interfered with "freedom of contract" between the pauper and the plutocrat. Men who got fortunes by trade were gradually buying out the old landed proprietors, and systematically clearing the estates and enclosing commons. In short, the time had arrived for another advance in the great historical development in the power of capital and the influence of land monopoly with pure competition rent as its commercial result. Landed estate was now being rated at its capitalised value estimated by the amount of interest represented by its rental. An estate of so much a year in land was figured to the mercantile man as a capital value of a pro-

portional sum.* Though landowners dominated Parliament, their economical position was of course very different from that of their feudal predecessors. The nobles and squires of the eighteenth century, though still to a great extent tied to their own property and neighbourhood, were really divorced from any duty towards the labourers, and had become sleeping partners in the profits of the farmer. The manufacturers, bankers, merchants, &c., exercised a pressure from without on the legislature similar in kind, though greater in degree than the working-classes exert upon our capitalist House of Commons now.

The artisans were in a period of transition like the rest. The old system was falling into ruins; the new class antagonism was but slightly felt. Already, however, the introduction of machinery cast its shadow before, and one thinker at least saw very early in the day what a complete social revolution its uncontrolled operation might bring about in the condition of the people. Sir James Steuart, writing in 1767, ten years before the publication of Adam Smith's work, says:—"Neither can a machine which abridges the labour of man be introduced *all at once* into an extensive manufacture without throwing many people into idleness . . . . . if a number of machines are all at once introduced into the manufacture of an industrious nation (in consequence of that freedom which must necessarily be indulged to all sorts of improvement, and without which a State cannot thrive), it becomes the business of a statesman to interest himself so far in the consequences as to provide a remedy for the inconveniences resulting from the sudden alteration."

But the power of the individual capitalist over the

*See Rodbertus-Jagetzoff in Appendix.

whole process of production and exchange had got too far by this time for any heed to be paid to such wise counsels. Each for himself had become almost the only guiding principle of the community. Everything led relentlessly up to the formation of a destitute proletariat in the country as well as in the great cities, entirely at the disposal of the possessing class. "Why do large undertakings in the manufacturing way ruin private industry," asks the writer last quoted, "but by coming nearer to the simplicity of slaves?" The simplicity of slaves indeed! Such is the lot provided for the mass of the English people from the end of the last century. The remainder of this work will trace the record of its development. From the yeoman and life-holder to the vagrant and farmer's hind; from the vagrant and farmer's hind to the agricultural labourer and artisan; from the artisan and agricultural labourer to the slave to the machine: Here is the sad evolution. The nobility and gentry who now owned the State and controlled the political business were as anxious for the extension of commerce as the trading class. Still, up to the latter half of the eighteenth century, England differed from other countries only in having larger commercial interests, in proportion to her population, than any other European nation. The great economical revolution that was all the time preparing had not yet become manifest. France, Germany, Italy, might, to all appearance, have as well taken the lead in the new processes of production as ourselves. That they did not was due to causes geographical, geological, social, and economical, which can now be clearly seen.

CHAPTER IV.

LABOUR AND SURPLUS VALUE.

In the last three chapters I have briefly passed through the economical and social transition from the England of the feudal times, when men were for the most part in command of their means of production which they handled for the purpose of obtaining articles of immediate use, only the superfluity being brought forward for exchange, they themselves also being bound to one another to their feudal superiors and to the Church by personal and not by mere pecuniary relations—from this period, which in the main represented rude wealth and prosperity for the people, the development of a race of landless families has been traced contemporaneously with a growth of large landowners, considerable farmers and capitalists, and an artisan and agricultural-labourer class, but few of whom could become masters of a business, or who could hope to obtain, either as owner or tenant, any large extent of land. During the whole of this 250 or 300 years, the condition of the mass of the people had been becoming more and more dependent upon the good pleasure of the classes above them. Exchange, which in the earlier period had been a secondary consideration for production, now gradually became the paramount object; the means of production also, as well as the control of individual exchange, instead of being very widely distributed, had become concentrated to a large

extent in the hands of a class. Banking, credit, the funding system, the world-wide character of the market for goods, and the expansion of commerce thence resulting, all tended in the same direction.

The developments of the power of human production, whether in agriculture or in manufacture, are necessarily due to a long series of circumstances, failing any one of which the improvement could not have been made. The introduction in agriculture of the turnip, of the potato, of artificial grasses, of rotation of crops; the vast improvement in the breed of domestic animals, which has enabled meat and beasts of burden to be produced of so much better quality than heretofore; the properties of manures and their right application; the preservation of fish by salting and curing, which added so enormously to our food supply, extending the cod, ling, and herring fisheries to the proportions of great industries: all these inventions are due to the combined observation and steady industry, not of one or two, but of thousands or millions of our race, though some lucky individuals may be honoured for the last crowning bit of work. Division of labour again, whether adapted to special advantages of soil and climate in particular regions—as wool-growing in Australia, cotton-growing in Louisiana, hunting and forestry in the Tyrol, &c.—or devoted to the abridgement of toil in workshops and factories, this, one of the most powerful engines for the domination of nature and the increase of produce, arises from the long, general, never-ceasing progress of human society, and is in nowise to be laid to the account of one or more men of individual genius.

Precisely the same with shipping and navigation. No man knows who invented the mariner's compass, or who first hollowed out a canoe from a log. The power to

observe accurately the sun, moon, and planets so as to fix a vessel's actual position when far out of sight of land, enabling long voyages to be safely made; the marvellous improvements in shipbuilding, which shortened passages by sailing vessels, and vastly reduced freights even before steam gave an independent force to the carrier—each and all were due to small advances, which together contributed to the general movement of mankind.

So with the great industrial inventions and machines, simple or complicated. Who can fix upon the actual discoverers of the application of wool or flax, silk or cotton, hemp or jute, madder or indigo to human use, or adornment, or luxury? Their names are legion, doubtless; but all have been swept away as time has slowly passed its effacing finger over the records of the past. With machines the same is true, from the simple wheel, the pump, the forge, the stencil-plate, and the potter's-wheel, onwards to printing, steam, electricity, and the great machine-making machines. Each owes all to the others. The forgotten inventors live for ever in the usefulness of the work they have done and the progress they have striven for. We of to-day may associate mythical or noble names with the advances we specially remember; but too often even then the real worker and discoverer, if such there were, remains unknown, and an invention, beautiful but useless in one age or country, can be applied only in a remote generation, or in a distant land. Mankind hangs together from generation to generation; easy labour is but inherited skill; great discoveries and inventions are worked up to by the efforts of myriads ere the goal is reached. Those, therefore, who hold that the individual is all, who contend that these organisers or that class have the right to take from their fellows in return for

the services they themselves have rendered, do but show their ignorance of the whole unbroken history of human progress and social development.

And now what is the basis and what the measure of the exchange-value of the commodities produced in our modern society? What is the meaning of the utility which they must possess ere such exchange can be carried on? It is on the correct answer to these two questions that an understanding of our complicated society depends, as well as a reasoning appreciation of the history of the great industrial revolution which dates from the end of the eighteenth century.

And first, what constitutes utility? what is a useful article? Clearly utility is but a function of society. Wheat itself would be of no use to a purely savage community; to an Australian black fellow a tail-coat would be a nuisance as a garment. We ourselves are not free in the matter. Potatoes are an article of utility to the poor Irishman, and he buys them; lace is an article of utility to the fine lady, and she purchases that. The salesman and the shopkeeper alike receive in return an article of industrial utility—money, or its representative. The position of the Irishman and the lady in the same society explains their respective purchases.* A tall hat is an uncomfortable headgear, yet it is an article of utility to a certain easy class in England under existing social conditions.†

* Marx, "Misère de la Philosophie," p. 17. This work was written by Karl Marx in French in 1847. It was a reply to the "Philosophie de la Misère" of Proudhon. The book, though short, contains some of the ablest criticisms on bourgeois economy ever penned.

† "Desire is appetite with consciousness thereof. From all which it appears we have not endeavour, will, appetite, or desire for anything because we deem it good; but contrariwise deem the thing good because we have an endeavour, will, appetite, or desire for it."—Pollock's

Thus, then, an article may be useful in one age or society which is wholly useless in another; it may even be useful to one grade in such society and wholly useless (save to exchange again which is not here in question) to another. It is not the individual even who forms the judgment as to the utility; but the class, or the social position in which he is placed forms it for him. There is, speaking generally, no real freedom of choice in the matter. Even our needs arise from the system of production, or from a state of things based on the production below.

When, however, two articles form the subject of sale and purchase, what is the basis and measure of such exchange-value? There are things in themselves useful which may have no exchange-value, such as air, water, and virgin soil. But two useful commodities which are exchanged must be equal on the average of dealings: their very exchange assumes their equality to one another, and their utility in the social conditions of the time. What then is the foundation of this equality between, say, a coat and a pair of boots? It is not that the leather and the cloth are of the same nature, that is clear. Their relative utility also has been determined, or they would not be exchanged. All that remains is the labour which goes to make them. If, then, we say that a coat is of equal value to a pair of boots, we mean that an equal quantity of average human labour has been expended in producing them. But this labour itself has two sides.* On the one hand it is devoted to produce

"Spinoza," p. 221. This seems to me the very foundation of the social idea of utility: "the endeavour, will, appetite, or desire" being formed for the individual by his begettings and his surroundings from birth.

* "There are two uses to everything owned, both essential, though not in the same way; the one being strictly proper to the article, and not the other. A shoe, for example, may either be worn or exchanged for

useful articles which may be of use only to the labourer himself and his family, and may never be brought into

something else; for both are uses of the shoe, and he who exchanges the shoe with someone who wants a shoe in return for money or food, uses the shoe, but not in its proper use, seeing that shoes are not made to be exchanged. The same is true of all other goods; for barter originated in nature, some having an overplus, and others less than they needed. Hence it is plain that selling food for money is not a necessary part of monetary science, for men were obliged to barter so far as to supply their wants. Now it is plain that barter could not hold its place in the original community, that is the household: it began when the numbers of those in the community increased; for the former had all things the same and in common, but those who separated had in common many other things which both were obliged to exchange as their wants arose. And this barter still exists among many barbarous tribes who exchange one necessary article for another, and nothing more; as giving and receiving wine for corn and the like. Barter of this kind is then not contrary to nature, nor is it anywise money-getting; but it is necessary in order to bring about natural independence. From barter, however, came, as might be expected, the use of money; for as the means of importing what was needed, or of exporting a surplus, was often at a great distance, the use of money was necessarily contrived. For it is not everything which is useful that can be easily carried, and on this account men invented something which they could give and receive by way of exchange, and being itself valuable, might readily be passed from hand to hand in the affairs of daily life, such as iron or silver, or anything of that kind. At first this had a fixed proportion according to its weight or size only; but in time a certain stamp was put on it to save the trouble of weighing, and this stamp was applied as evidence of its actual value. Money, then, being contrived owing to the necessity for exchange, the second kind of money-getting came through buying and selling; this was probably carried out at first simply, but by and by more skill and experience were employed to find out where and in what way the greatest profit could be made. Whence the art of money-getting seems to busy itself chiefly with trade, and its end is to determine where the greatest profit can be made; for it is the means of getting great wealth and possessions . . . It would seem that some boundary should be set to riches, though in practice we see the contrary takes place; for all those who get riches add endlessly to their money."—Aristotle's "Politics," book i. chap. ix.

Aristotle was only prevented by the existence of slavery which dis-

exchange at all. A coat or a pair of boots is equally the result of useful labour, whether they are worn by the maker or by a third person. Whereas labour expended on useless work, such as digging a pit and filling it up again, constitutes, of course, no value whatsoever. On the other hand, labour is the expenditure of force from a man's body, the exhaustion of certain forces, mental and physical, which go to make up the man as a whole. It is, therefore, the quantity of this labour-force reckoned on its social average, which determines the equality between the boots and the coat when brought forward and exchanged.

When, however, Adam Smith, Ricardo, and other middle-class economists talk of labour as the original natural price of all things which are exchanged in all times, they apply to one form of human society ideas which belong to a totally different and far more elaborate condition of human society. The aboriginal hunter or fisher assuredly never considered his fish or his game from the point of view of its exchange-value at all; he never considered, as between a salmon and a deer, that so many days' work in the one would exchange for an equal number of days' work devoted to procuring the other. Such a view is simply our modern idea, which considers everything solely from the exchange stand-point, taken and applied to the action of mankind in ages or under conditions —we can see the conditions in Polynesia, Australia, and parts of Africa to-day—when no conception of exchange-value in the modern sense had entered the human mind. The statement nevertheless is correct enough as regards the

guised the basis of value from giving a complete analysis of exchange. It is sad to reflect upon the slow movement of human society, and to remember that 2000 years of "progress" have but substituted the wage-slave, industrial and domestic, of the nineteenth century, for the body-slave of Aristotle's day.

present time. Human labour-force applied to commodities reckoned useful in existing social conditions does constitute the basis of exchange-value; the quantity of labour-force socially necessary to produce such commodities and bring them forward for exchange, does constitute the measure of their relative exchange-value. Thus the two values of a commodity, its value in use and its value in exchange, are represented by the two sides of expenditure of labour-force —its quality and quantity.

But it is universally admitted by economists that under ordinary conditions—and in all human affairs as length of life, marriageable age, amount of education, rate of mortality, we necessarily speak of the average and not of the exceptions which increase or depress that average—it is admitted in all ordinary conditions, I say, that the reduction in the quantity of labour needed to procure or to produce an article, reduces to that extent the value of that article relatively to other commodities. Diamonds fall in relative value, other things being equal, if a new field is discovered which can be more easily worked; whilst if by any new chemical process they could be produced at a cost of labour representing an average day's work per carat no matter what the weight, then diamonds would in due time fall to that relative value with respect to other articles, whether of luxury or necessity, which enter into exchange.

Apply this to the boots and the coat, and what follows? If the boots can be produced with half as much labour as before, then a coat (no change in the total quantity of labour necessary to make it having taken place) is equal in value to two pair of boots, and so on through all the variations resulting from the decrease or increase of necessary labour-force to be expended. But this equality

can of course be extended in many directions, every useful article being considered in regard to its quality and quantity. Say the coat and the two pair of boots are equal each to twenty yards of linen, to one ounce of gold, to a ton of iron, then, evidently, the same quantity of human labour-force has gone to produce these articles, and any reduction in the amount of labour socially necessary to produce any one of them will change its relative value with respect to all the rest.

We may, if we please, express the value of all these commodities in boots. Thus, a coat, twenty yards of linen, a ton of iron, and an ounce of gold may all be measured in pairs of boots. There have been periods in the history of the human race when mankind have used quite as cumbrous articles as boots to measure the value of commodities brought into the market for exchange. Cattle, salt, iron, cloth, furs, sugar, salt-fish, cowries have each and all been used as a general standard of the exchange-value of other commodities in the market of different societies at various ages of the world. Gold and silver have this one property in common with them as well as with the boots—that they are the produce of human labour, and will therefore exchange in certain quantities determined by the equal quantity of labour needed to bring each in face of the other for such exchange. Thus it is clear that in the equation given above, the coat, the two pairs of boots, the twenty yards of linen, and the ton of iron are all equal to an ounce of gold. Put in that form, relative-value then becomes price; and we say, the price of twenty yards of linen, &c., is an ounce of gold.

The reasons for employing gold and silver for a standard of value need not be given here, it is enough that their

convenience for the purpose of coinage is universally recognised, and that bullion—gold in the West, silver in the East—is the money of the world. Yet gold and silver are valuable, and represent the exchange-value or price of other commodities not from any intrinsic utility or fitness, but because they in themselves represent the manifest embodiment of so much human labour expended to procure them. This, of course, is not invariably the same. The discoveries in California and Australia have in our own time greatly reduced the quantity of labour necessary for obtaining gold, and consequently its relative value to other commodities has fallen; that is to say, as we now speak, the prices of commodities estimated in gold have risen. The value of the so-called precious metals is, however, sufficiently stable for the practical purposes of exchange, and gold has become not only a real but an ideal standard of value. We say such and such a commodity is worth so much money, and often things are regarded simply and solely with reference to their money value. It is this fetichism of money in fact which prevents our middle-class society, from the shopkeeper to the aristocrat and political economist, from seeing the real causes of the evils, and the anarchical fluctuations, in our present social state. Wealth seems to come from above instead of being entirely due to the labour below, and the expenditure of money gives employment, no matter how uselessly the possessor of the medium of exchange and the means of production commands labour to exert itself.

Thus, then, to repeat, social labour-force devoted to useful work is the basis of the exchange value of a commodity, and the quantity of such labour-force, or what amounts to the same thing, the time during which it is exerted, constitutes its measure; this in turn is represented

in a definite quantum of money—that is, coined gold or silver; which gold and silver, as they are dug from the bowels of the earth, figure as the direct embodiment of human labour.

But it is not the money that enables us to value the commodities.* Far otherwise. It is simply because all commodities represent actual human labour already expended on natural objects, thus producing articles useful in the existing social conditions, that their relative value is

* "It is not with money that things are really purchased. Nobody's income (except that of the gold or silver miner) is derived from the precious metals. The pounds or shillings which a person receives weekly or yearly are not what constitutes his income; they are a sort of tickets or orders which he can present for payment at any shop he pleases, and which entitle him to receive a certain value of any commodity that he makes choice of. The farmer pays his labourers and his landlord in these tickets as the most convenient plan for himself and them; but their real income is the share of *his* corn, cattle, and hay, and it makes no essential difference whether he distributes it to them directly, or sells it for them and gives them the price [it really makes a great difference both in fact and in theory; but Mr Mill is writing solely with reference to our bourgeois, profit-mongering, wage-slave society of to-day]; but as they would have to sell it for money if he did not, and as he is a seller at any rate, it best suits the purposes of all that he should sell their share along with his own, and leave the labourers more leisure for work (!) and the landlord for being idle. The capitalists, except those who are producers of the precious metals, derive no part of their income from those metals since they only get them by buying them with their own produce [both metals and produce being merely the embodiment in social value of other men's labour]; while all other persons have their incomes paid to them by the capitalists, or by those who have received payment from the capitalists, and as the capitalists have nothing from the first except their produce, it is that and nothing else which supplies all the incomes furnished by them. . . . . The reasons which make the temporary or market value of things depend on *demand* and *supply*, and their average and permanent values upon their cost of production, are as applicable to a money system as to a system of barter."—J. S. Mill, "Principles of Political Economy," vol. ii., p. 9. The "cost of production" is, of course, the quantity of labour necessary in all to produce them. Exchange-value, however, depends upon the cost of reproduction.

consequently measurable by one another, and that they can all be valued in one special commodity. This last becomes, as we have seen, money, and is a measure for them all; though, like the rest, its relative value consists in the fact that it represents the expenditure of human labour for a useful purpose.

Now it is quite possible that states of society may exist in which a considerable degree of civilisation is attained, and yet in which exchange is either unknown or is not conducted by the individual. Such social conditions are well known to all students of history; and the village communities of India and Mexico exhibit a state of society where, though a considerable degree of civilisation had been attained, exchange was unknown in our modern sense. In Mexico, in particular, it has been almost conclusively shown that the Spaniards under Cortez mistook for an imperial system what was in reality a purely communal society—social tribes working, cultivating, and living in common.* In such communities exchange took place between the communes, the villages, the gens, the tribes, and not between the individuals who simply took part in the common organised work, and shared in the common food. That a family, or two or three families, may live together, producing by their labour all that they need for food and raiment without exchange in our sense, may still be seen in many parts of the world. But in such a country as England to-day, it may be said that for all practical purposes everything is produced for exchange, and consequently the "producer" is as much obliged to sell by the conditions around him as the "consumer" is to buy.

* Lewis Morgan, in *North American Review*, 1874; Montezuma's Dinner.

Every exchange in these circumstances presupposes that there is on the one side a purchaser with a desire to buy, and something marketable to buy with; and on the other a seller with the need to sell and an equal value to offer. The higgling to determine particular relations of value need not concern us.* Each sale, however, involves a purchase, and each purchase a sale. A man may exchange a coat for a pair of boots, and both parties to the exchange may be on the same footing as regards the value, and benefited by each having a needed useful article from the other. Or an article of utility in the hands of one person who does not want it may be exchanged for its equivalent labour-value in money, and then he may with that money purchase another article of utility which he needs. A coat sold for a sum of money—that sum of money employed to buy boots. In such a transaction we have a useful commodity exchanged for a useful commodity, both then going from the region of exchange into that of actual use, and being worn out in due course; the money, after having facilitated the exchange, working in another direction as a means for circulating other commodities. Here again, we see a simple individual exchange without profit, as if the one object of all parties was to produce and exchange for the benefit of each. But this individual exchange, as the ruling principle of commerce even with profit, presupposes, as we have already seen, the command by the individual of the means of production. Very different is the process in our actual life.†

* This higgling about price is of course interesting, immediate price being determined, as bourgeois economists truly state, by supply and demand; but I am not now concerned with these superficial phenomena. The supply and demand average themselves over long periods.

† "But since riches may be applied, as we have said, to two purposes,

A merchant holds money or its representative in bills or credit to the amount of say £100. Therewith he goes out on to the market and buys £100 worth of raw cotton. So far the exchange may be perfectly fair and exact. The merchant *may* have given his own social labour-value as embodied in £100 sterling for another man's labour as embodied in a mass of raw cotton. But having bought, he goes away and sells his purchased cotton for £110, making, as it is said, £10 by the transaction.* His £100 was turned into

the one to make money of, the other for the service of the house; of these the first is necessary and commendable, the other which has to do with traffic is justly censured; for it has not its origin in nature, but among ourselves; for usury is most reasonably detested as the increase of our fortune arises from the money itself, and not by employing it for the purpose for which it was intended. For it was devised for the work exchange, but usury multiplies it. And hence usury has received the name a 'produce,' for whatever is produced is itself like its parents; and usury is merely money born of money: so that of all means of money-making, this is most contrary to nature."—Aristotle, "Politics," book i. chap. x. Denunciations of usury are found frequently in the Levitical books, and the early Christian fathers boil over with angry denunciations against usury and usurers. Nowadays we know better. *Our* usurers and capitalists "square" the modern Christian fathers, and figure as philanthropists, say in London, after having ground people to death at Birmingham, Nottingham, Liverpool, or Manchester. "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Better not indeed.

* "Division of labour originally took the shape of lords of the soil being also masters of the capital. Capital means raw material, incidental material and tools; capital is product which is used for further production, and when reduced to labour, it is *labour already expended.* So long as the lords of the soil are also masters of the capital, the raw material is necessarily worked up in the same employ, that is, in the employ of the landowner, whether the work is done by slaves or by free labourers; the landowner is at the same time a 'manufacturer' and a wholesale dealer in the finished goods into the bargain. In this case, the *entire* rent falls to the lot of one owner of land and capital combined in the same person, and no distinction is made between ground-rent and capital-rent. This arrangement predominated in Greece and Rome, and is one reason why the rich field of political economy remained undis-

its equivalent in goods, and then appeared again as £110. Not only is the original sum replaced, but £10 more is added; the merchant's £100 has acted as commercial capital.

The merchant bought not for himself, or to work up for the use of others, but merely because on the average of dealings —and here of course not an individual but a class is spoken of—he knew he could sell his cotton again at an enhanced price. This is something very different from the use of money as a means of measuring the value of commodities, or as the means of facilitating exchange. It is commercial capital which its owner only uses when he sees, or thinks he sees, an opportunity for increasing it, or, which amounts to the same thing, of deriving a revenue from it without manual labour on his own part. Money to start with and then more money, that is the process. The buying of the cotton is but an intermediate stage which disguises the transaction. But clearly the amount of value actually in existence and circulation at any given moment—that is the quantity of human labour embodied in useful commodities —cannot increase of itself. The merchant who has in his possession a commodity whose value expressed in money is £100 can only increase it absolutely and make it £110 by the addition of more labour to the labour-value represented in the first instance—as by spinning the raw cotton into yarn. The yarn is worth more than the raw cotton, but

covered by the ancients because they never had the idea of capital in its economical or social sense, but only as capital in the shape of money (geld-capital)."—Rodbertus, 1850. Those who wish to form some idea of the views of this little-known economist, will find an admirable summary in Dr Rudolph Meyer's "Emancipations—Kampf des Vierten Standes," pp. 57-77, which I have translated, and give in the form of an Appendix to this work. At the present time, also, Rodbertus' Credit-Noth des Grundbesitzes is worth study, though the style is heavy and wearisome to the last degree. Rodbertus was in constant correspondence with Lassalle: he died in 1875.

the value of the raw cotton remains the same. Thus then all the conditions remaining the same, the owner of the money to start with must buy goods at their exact value and sell again them for what they are worth, and yet have in his possession at the end more value than he had at the beginning.

Here we have the crucial problem of modern economy.

The increase of value by which money is turned into capital and becomes more money obviously cannot arise from the money itself. It follows then that the conversion of money into goods, and then of those same goods into more money, producing in this way an additional value for the original owner of the money, must arise from the goods. But how? Commodities can no more increase their own exchange-value than can the money. In order therefore to obtain an additional exchange-value from a commodity, a sort of commodity must be found which itself possesses the remarkable quality of being the source of exchange-value, so that to consume it would be to obtain that very labour-force embodied in value and consequently to create value.

Now it so happens that the capitalist does find on the market a purchaseable commodity endowed with this specific virtue. This is called labour or force of labour. Under that name are included the entire capacities, physical and intellectual, which exist in the body of a man, and which he must set in motion in order to produce articles of utility. Evidently the force of labour cannot present itself on the market for sale, unless it is offered by its owner; he must be able to dispose of it—that is, he must be the free owner of his labour—of the force in his own body. The moneyed man and he meet on the market: one buys, the other sells, and both are quits.

But the owner of this labour-force must only sell it for a definite time; if he sells it for an indefinite time, from being a merchant, he himself, his force of labour and all, becomes a mere commodity. He himself is thenceforward a slave or a serf at the command of his master as much as any of his other goods and chattels. This form of labour is of course well known in the slavery of ancient and modern times; the slave himself and all that he produced was the property of his master, and it depends upon whether he can get another equally good slave cheap or not, as to how far he shall use that slave well, or feed him little and work him to death.*

In modern economical conditions the essential point for the capitalist anxious to buy force of labour is that the owner of the labour-force instead of being able to keep himself by the produce of work from his own land, or by selling useful articles in which he has himself embodied his labour, or by his labour organised in connection with other labour under the control of the community at large, should be obliged to sell to the capitalist the labour-force in his body

* Slavery originally practised this compulsion. Labourers who produced a surplus by their labour became slaves; and the master who owned the labourers as well as their product gave the slaves only just so much of it as was needful for them to carry on their work; the remainder he took for himself. If all the land and all the capital of a country is private property, landed property and capitalist property exert similar compulsion on the free labourer. For this will have the same effect as slavery, (1.) because the product belongs not to the labourers but to the owners, (2.) because the labourers who own nothing, as against the masters who own the land and the capital, will be glad to take a part of the produce of their own labour in order to keep body and together, that is, to carry on their labour. Thus to be sure in the orders of the slave-driver we have the free contract of the his employer; but this contract is only free in name hunger fully makes up for the whip. What in slavery n free contract figures as wages. Rodbertus 1850.

pure and simple. Under any one of the three conditions just named the labourer is master of his own labour: he is an independent man. He has either the means of supporting himself directly, or of exchanging his own labour as embodied in useful articles for other men's labour also embodied in useful articles, upon equal terms: in short, he is free. But in order that labour-force should be converted into capital, the workman himself must be free in a very different sense. Not only must he be ready to sell his labour as a commodity, but further, he must be *free*—so very free, that he has nothing else in the world but his force of labour to sell—that he should be completely destitute of the means of realising his own labour-force in commodities by himself, or in co-operation with others on equal terms, having neither tools, nor land, nor raw material wherewith to do so.

How does this free labourer thus find himself on the market ready to enter into free contract for his labour-force? That does not in the least concern the owner of the money or capital, who looks upon the labour-market as merely a branch of the rest of the market for commodities, and governed by the same laws. The appearance of this destitute labourer there is nevertheless, as has been seen, the result of a long series of economical evolutions and revolutions extending over centuries. By the latter half of the eighteenth century the mass of the people in England had been driven from the ownership of land, deprived of the possibility of earning their own independent living, and were ready for the full development of the great modern machine industry. Nature most assuredly does not turn out possessors of money and the means of production on the one side, and owners of their pure labour-force and nothing else on

the other. Capital only makes its appearance in social affairs when that part of the wealth of a country which is employed in production consisting of food, clothing, tools, raw materials, machinery, money, &c., necessary to give effect to labour, is found in the hands of a class which meets on the market the destitute free labourer come thither to sell his labour.*

What, however, is this force of labour which the free owner of it comes on to the market to sell? Clearly it is a human force, physical, moral, intellectual, which requires certain food, clothing, and lodging—all at the command of the moneyed class and not of the labourer—to keep it in order and supplied, so that the waste of one day may be made good and the force may return with equal vigour the next. These necessaries vary, of course, with different climates and with different degrees of civilisation and standards of life. But in any given country or period, the average needs of the labourers are known. If, therefore, in the competition of the labour market the labourer sells his labour-force for the precise sum in money-wages which will enable him to maintain himself in the average condition of his class, he gets just what has been called the "natural price" of his labour. This is, according to the accepted teaching of middle-class economists, "that price which is necessary to enable labourers to subsist and to perpetuate their race without either increase or diminution."† The

* Whether slavery or free labour *is most profitable to the employer* ends on the wages of the free labourer. J. S. Mill, Principles of tical my, vol. i., p. 305. Rather cynically put this, it seems ie nicism is even more in the fact than in its way of

ire to see the completest summary of the bourgeois on law of wages under unrestricted competition, will

tendency that is—leaving aside for the moment the competition of women and children to be dealt with hereafter—of the wages of adult male labourers who compete upon the open market, is towards a minimum which will just keep themselves, their wives and progeny, in the social condition

find it in F. Lassalle's Arbeiterlesebuch, pp. 4-18, German-American edition of 1872. Chicago. Of course I am perfectly well aware that the competition is never entirely unrestricted. There is a stratification of labourers in our existing society as there is a stratification of other classes. It is well known, also, that labour-force is based upon the material sustenance a man gets; or, as Mr Francis Walker puts it, so much coal is needed for a steam-engine to work at full pressure, so much food for a man. The Dorsetshire or Devonshire agricultural labourer gives less than the average English social labour-force, because he has been insufficiently trained and badly fed from childhood. Give him better food and good training, and if not too old when it begins, he will soon pick up. Mr Brassey, the contractor, we know, found that in his operations cheap labour was by no means always cheap in reality. Chinese labour is both actually and relatively cheap, so far as I have observed; but then the Chinaman is invariably an educated man, ready to improve his food in proportion to the labour to be done as he is paid for it. His systematic underselling of European labourers in certain trades is an exception to the ordinary rule. Of course, if a capitalist can get labourers to run his machinery equally well in one country for more hours or for a less proportion of the product than in another, he can, by employing his capital in the country where longer hours or lower wages rule, undersell his brethren at home, who have to pay more wages or work shorter hours. That is how the Germans, and English capitalists who own factories in Germany, with their rapidly-increasing steam and water-power now undersell us in so many branches of trade. The late Professor Cairnes' observations on the grouping of labour are worth quoting:—"No doubt the various ranks and classes fade into each other by imperceptible gradations, and individuals from all classes are constantly passing up or dropping down; but while this is so, it is nevertheless true that the average workman, from whatever rank he be taken, finds his power of competition limited for practical purposes, to a certain range of occupations so that, however high the rates of remuneration in those which lie beyond may rise, he is excluded from sharing them." Karl Marx, in the Capital, has dealt exhaustively with the question of social labour force. See chapters xv., xxii., and xxv.

of their class.* In this way we have that amount of average daily necessaries which will maintain a race of destitute bargainers, and replace them with equally destitute successors. If some gain above this ordinary price of their labour, others work far below it, and the average, when the manner in which the working-class are used up is considered, is certainly not above the starvation level.†

Moreover, the reduction of the price—that is, in the average amount of labour needed to the production—of the commodities which enter into the necessary existence of the worker, in nowise benefits him. Competition between the

* The higher wages which some workers get than others do not vitiate this. Complex labour is at most a multiple of simple labour.

† Nor can it even be maintained that at any rate the food, clothing, &c., necessary to keep the labourer in the most efficient condition, will give us a minimum below which the self-interest of employers, if duly enlightened, will not suffer wages to fall. This would, no doubt, be true, if the present labourers alone were concerned, and if the employers could actually feed, clothe, and shelter his labourers just as he feeds, covers, and shelters his horses. But when we consider the labourer as a free and independent citizen, and also as the father of a family, spending at his own discretion a considerable portion of his wages in rearing a future generation of labourers, the case is altered. Suppose that the employer knows that his labourer is under-fed, and that half-a-crown a week, spent on nourishing food and warm clothing, would result in more than half-a-crown's worth of extra value in the produce of the week's labour, it does not follow that it is his interest to give him the extra half-crown; for in the first place the labourer may spend a large portion of it in alcoholic liquors, &c., which will impair rather than increase his efficiency; and, secondly, he may spend a large portion of it in providing better food and clothing for his family, which, though it may be amply repaid to society in the additional efficiency of the future labourers whom he is rearing, will not necessarily afford any pecuniary advantage to the employer who may have no means of securing to himself any of the value of this future efficiency. [Henry Sidgwick, Principles of Political Economy, p. 311.] Could there be a more complete denunciation of our present system? Yet Mr Sidgwick's most disappointing book doesn't even go to the root of first principles.

labourers and the introduction of improved machinery speedily reduce the margin of the wages to the level which restores the old inexorable law to its relentless pressure. Cheap food and cheap clothing mean only that unless the worker can take himself out of the wage-earning class altogether, he has to accept a lower relative wage as the result of competition. This, the iron law of wages in a country where freedom of contract is maintained between the pauper and the plutocrat, is also the law which decrees the perpetual degradation of the wage-earning class.

The capitalist, whether farmer or manufacturer, buys his labour as cheap as he can, and applies it to the land which he holds or rents, or to the raw material which he has purchased, so that he may produce food or commodities for exchange at a profit. When also the capitalist buys the labour-force it is the owner of the labour who sells on credit. The labourer works, with few exceptions, for a day, week, fortnight, month, before he receives his wages. He advances his labour as embodied in the commodity or part of the commodity to the capitalist: the capitalist advances nothing to him. This gives the employer every advantage. If he fails the labourers suffer: they are not paid under our law, for the labour has been sold beforehand, and duly delivered by the expenditure of force from the labourer's body. And this consumption of force of labour produces not only commodities but surplus value—an additional value which belongs to the capitalist besides. Everything else which is needed for the purposes of production—raw material, machinery, &c.—have been bought by the capitalist at their actual market value and paid for at their actual market price. It is from labour only, the labour-force of human beings compelled to

compete against one another for a bare subsistence wage, that the actual employer derives his surplus value, and the merchant, &c., his profit. Out of this, his last purchase, bought on credit, the capitalist makes his capital breed. This labour-force, bought of its owner in the open market and then embodied in the commodity—this it is which gives the capitalist the additional value he hungers for.

But when an employer pays his labourers their wages they are really being paid a portion of the value of their own work in the shape of orders on other labourers.* An ironmaster gives his men an order on the butcher, or the baker, or the grocer, and redeems it in a certain proportion of the plates or rails the men have made. This payment of money he has generally got back by selling his iron ware in the market. The wages which a competitive wage-earning labourer gets do not consist in the money, but in what the money—that portion of the value of the

* Thomas Hodgskin, "Popular Political Economy," 1827, p. 247. This is a very remarkable little book. Note the date.

The illusion produced by the circulation of commodities disappears when we substitute for the individual capitalist and his workmen the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalist class regularly gives to the working class, in the form of money, orders upon a portion of the products that the workers have made and the employers have taken unto themselves. The working class constantly give back also their orders to the capitalist class to obtain that portion of their own product which returns to them. What disguises the transaction is the commodity form of the product and the money form of the commodity. Variable capital is, therefore, only a particular historical form of the so-called labour-fund which the labourer must always produce and reproduce himself in all possible systems of production. If, in the capitalist system, this fund only reaches the workman in the form of wages, of means of payment of his own labour, that is because his own product always slips away from him in the shape of capital. But that does not alter the fact that it is only a portion of his very own past and already realised labour that the workman receives as an advance from the capitalist.—"Capital." Marx, p. 248.

commodity which he receives in return for his labour—will bring him; and the bread, beef, beer, grocery, clothes, he buys with that money consist of the labour of other men. Thus it is throughout, and labour, not capital, pays all wages, though the condition of our modern society is such that the man who grows grain in Illinois, the negro growing cotton in Louisiana, the coolie growing indigo in Bengal, cannot see that they are paying the wages of the factory-hand in Lancashire, or the iron-worker at the furnace, any more than such a worker can see that he is paying them.*

In practice, of course, the labourer only gets back a small fraction of the value he produces in the shape of the money-wages he receives. For the working man who has sold his labour works under the control of the capitalist to whom his labour now belongs for an agreed period, and whose object it is that he should work hard and continuously. The reason why it seems that the capitalist does pay the labourer is because he possesses the means of production to start with, and the product in which the worker's force of labour is embodied is the property of the capitalist at the end. Wages, therefore, are paid by the capitalist in the same way as he would pay the hire of a horse or a mule. Then the employer applies this human merchandise which he has thus bought "on the cheap" to his raw materials and machinery. The result is a social value; and not only such value, but a surplus value for the capitalist himself, derived from this purchased labour.

For if a man can live on a shilling a day, and sells his labour-force to a capitalist for that sum; if the labourer then produces a value in the day's work of thirty shillings,

* Mr Henry George brings out this portion of the subject well.

the capitalist considers that he has a perfect right to pocket the surplus value of twenty-nine shillings which the labourer has furnished by the expenditure of his labour-force.* Fear of starvation is the weapon which brings the workman to a sense of his duty in this respect. As much as he can get, so much will the capitalist take.

Now it begins to be clear how the £100 becomes £110, without additional value from the merchant. Now, too, the admirable working of supply and demand and freedom of contract on those who have no means of production begins to appear.

Middle-class political economy assumes that rent, profit, interest on capital, discount on bills, and all the rest of it, are in the very nature of the case. It is in the eternal fitness of things that labour which provides all wealth should be neglected, and that political economy should only concern itself as to how the surplus value it gives is divided among the bankers, merchants, capitalists, and shareholders, after the miserable competition wage is paid to the workers.†

Take the case of a farmer. He has taken a farm from a landlord at a rent which is supposed to leave him a fair interest on capital which he "put in." He buys his manures and his cattle at market price, and feeds the latter and his horses well because it pays him to do so; but out of the agricultural labourer, who really does all the hard work on the farm, he grinds all the labour he can, and thus

* Bronterre O'Brien, 1835, in the "Poor Man's Guardian." This is the first plain statement, I think, of "surplus value" in this form.

† I have not thought it necessary to deal with the exploded wage-fund theory. Marx crushed it five-and-thirty years ago, and since then it has been abandoned by the bourgeois economists themselves. Longe, Walker, Cairnes, Cliffe Leslie, J. S. Mill himself, and lately Sidgwick, have surrendered it altogether.

...ds the means out of the embodied labour-force of the ...nable hind at a few shillings a week (who rarely, accord... to the medical reports, escapes disease resulting from ...ufficient nourishment) to get together surplus value enough ... pay, on the average, rent, interest on his capital, and ... keep himself well besides. Many a landowner is posi... ...y ignorant of the fact that he himself is but a pensioner ... the labour of the ill-fed agricultural labourer who ... touches his cap to him at the park gates.*

An illustration may be given from the cotton industry. ... that the workman† gets three shillings a day for his ... and that he produces the value of this, the amount ... on the average supplies him with necessaries in five ... or half a-day's work—a very wide margin being thus ... the workman's side. The capitalist buys ten ... of raw cotton for ten shillings. In that price is ... expressed the labour needed for the production, ... and marketing of the raw cotton. Put the ... wear of machinery, waste, &c. (which necessarily ... expenditure of labour to replace it), in working ... cotton into yarn at two shillings. If a piece of ... value ... lve shillings is the equivalent of the ... work, it follows that there are, ...rted in the factory, two full days ...day embodied in the yarn at the ... This accounts for the labour ...ort the raw cotton as well as the ...he wear and tear.

... pensioners on labour whom we call the ...

... applies to both sexes. In a cotton ...nds."

It has already been assumed that the workman must furnish five hours' labour in order to earn three shillings, the money required to supply him with his absolute social necessaries. Now, assume further, that it takes five hours' labour to turn ten pounds of cotton into ten pounds of yarn —and all these assumptions are well within the mark*— then the workman in five hours' work has added to the raw cotton a value in labour of three shillings, or half a day's work. So at the end of that five hours the ten pounds of yarn contain altogether two days and a half of labour. Raw cotton, wear and tear, waste, &c., stand for two days, and half a day has been absorbed by the cotton in the process of spinning. This quantity of labour, according to our assumptions, would therefore be reckoned in a piece of gold of the value of fifteen shillings; that is to say, the price of the ten pounds of yarn spun from the cotton is eighteen pence per pound. Here, obviously, is no gain to the capitalist. He gave one shilling a pound for his ten pounds of raw cotton, the wear and tear and waste cost him two shillings for the ten pounds, and he paid the workman three shillings for five hours' work on the ten pounds—these together eat up the whole of the capital paid out, and yet the ten pounds of yarn only fetch one shilling and sixpence a pound, which is the value of the average quantity of labour contained in it. This, therefore, shows no surplus value whatever.

But the employer has bought the free labourer's whole day's work upon the market. He can make him work,

* Mr R. Porter, a skilled American investigator, writing to the *New York Tribune* in the summer of this year, as to the wages of English factory-hands in the cotton districts, says :—"In no case did we find a female spinner who earned more than 14s. a week, a piecer who earned more than 10s. 6d. a week, a weaver who earned over 16s. if a woman, and not over 22s. if a man."

consequently, not merely the five hours required to produce the return of the three shillings agreed, but ten hours—a full day's work. Now, if five hours' work produces ten pounds of yarn from ten pounds of cotton, ten hours' work will give twenty pounds of yarn from twenty pounds of raw cotton. These twenty pounds of yarn will thus contain five full days' labour, of which four are contained in the raw cotton, wear and tear of machinery, coal, waste, &c., and one full day is absorbed by the yarn during the process of spinning. The expression in money, then, of these five days' work is thirty shillings. That, therefore, is the market price of the twenty pounds of yarn. The yarn is sold now, as it was before, at one shilling and sixpence a pound. But the sum of the values embodied in the yarn, including the full day's labour in the factory, does not exceed twenty-seven shillings in all. That is to say, twenty shillings for the twenty pounds of raw cotton, four shillings for the wear and tear, and waste, &c., on twenty hours' work, and three shillings paid to the labourer for his full day's labour of ten hours in the factory. The value of the product has, therefore, increased during the process of manufacture. The twenty-seven shillings have become thirty shillings. Those twenty-seven shillings advanced by the capitalist have begotten a surplus value of three shillings on the twenty pounds of yarn, and the trick is done. The capitalist has used a certain amount of another man's labour under free contract, for his own behoof, without paying anything for it, and the trick is done at that man's expense. That free labour, which is sold in the open market, enables the capitalist to sell the twenty pounds of yarn he has made at the regular price of one shilling and sixpence a pound, and, nevertheless, to increase his capital by three shillings on his [illegible] of

twenty pounds of yarn. And this surplus value so produced the capitalist, the landlord, the banker, the broker, the shopkeeper, the merchant, divide up among themselves in various proportions. The whole additional value is obtained from that free labour which is bound to be sold on the market to the owners of the means of production, in order that its possessor may keep body and soul together, and hand on the like lot to his children.

This exposition gives in brief Karl Marx's famous theory of surplus value, which, though stated by more than one English writer before him, and put forward in a philosophical form by Rodbertus, was first elaborated and proved as the basis of our modern system of profit-making by Marx himself. It is clear that it quite changes the view of the distribution of wealth which finds favour with ordinary economists even now. We have seen that inventions and progress in various directions are not due to any particular class, that the organisation of labour is not the result of the skill of individuals, but is the outcome of the growth of society; yet one class is called upon to do all the labour, whilst others live enfranchised from all manual and even, in many cases, useful mental work.

Moreover, we have already shown that capital itself is not the result of saving or of that abstinence which the orthodox political economists make such a parade of. There was, perhaps, some excuse for thinking this when the capitalist was obliged to have in his possession an accumulation of the precious metals, or of commodities, in order to command other people's labour; and for imagining that on such accumulation depended the progress of human society. But when paper-money was invented, and parchment securities came into vogue—" when the possessor of nothing but such a piece

of parchment received an annual revenue in pieces of paper with which he obtained whatever was necessary for his own use or consumption, and, not giving away all the pieces of paper, was richer at the end of the year than at the beginning, or was entitled next year to receive a still greater number of pieces of paper, obtaining a still greater command over the produce of labour, it became evident to demonstration that capital was not anything saved; and that the individual capitalist did not grow rich by an actual and material saving, but by doing something which enabled him, according to some conventional usage, to obtain more of the produce of other men's labour."*

The rate at which the produce of other men's labour is taken for nothing "according to some conventional usage" is somewhat different in different trades, but it is manifest that the rate of surplus value or the amount of extra labour ought not to be calculated on the total amount of capital employed. Capital is divided into two portions, that which is used to maintain the machinery, buy the raw materials, &c., and that which is expended on paying labour. The former portion is constant, and is simply reproduced without increase after labour has been expended upon it; the latter portion is variable and is that which produces surplus value. The rate of surplus value produced therefore, the proportion of labour turned to account by the capitalist without paying for it, should be reckoned only on the amount of capital "advanced" to pay the owner of the labour-force the competition price of his labour.

What now is the proportion which the necessary labour for the purpose of replacing these wages bears to the extra and unpaid for labour which is used for the benefit of the capitalist

* Hodgskin, p. 248, 1827.

class alone? Take the record of any great industry, and reckon it in this way, and it will be found that the labourer gets from one-third to one-half at the outside of the labour-value he produces returned to him in the form of wages, seeing that he works but three or four hours out of the regular ten hours now the rule in factories to replace the labour-value represented by his wages, and the remaining six or seven hours he works for other people who divide his extra and unpaid-for work among them. Later this can be examined from a more general point of view. At present we have arrived historically but on the threshold of that extraordinary revolution which has made England for the last hundred years the wonder of the world and the greatest field for economical study. So far, it can be seen how the capitalist system works even in its less complex forms when the house industry, the family industry, the simple co-operation and small division of labour were the dominant methods, when farms were still small and the farmers for the most part were rooted to their farms. Even then if a man could earn the absolute necessaries of life in five hours' work, and a capitalist employed two such men, then each of these workmen would have to work ten hours a day, and still no provision of additional capital be allowed for if he himself lived only twice as expensively as his workpeople. In this way it is that each man who lives in idleness forces others to labour far in excess of what is needful or healthy, in order that he may continue in luxury and ease.*

* For what justice is this that a rich goldsmith or an usurer, or to be short any of them which either do nothing at all, or else that which they do is not very necessary to the commonwealth, should have a pleasant and a wealthy living either by idleness or by unnecessary business? When in the meantime, poor labourers, carters, iron smiths, ers, and ploughmen by so great and continual toil as drawing

The machine or the tool which the workman uses does but convey to the raw material the amount of labour-value necessary to replace the amount of wear and tear which has gone on during the process of manufacture together with the value of the other materials wasted or used up in the process. The only additional value obtained by the capitalist is from the labour-force of the wage-earners he employs. His object, therefore, is first that the workman should work hard and continuously, and secondly, that the time of necessary labour—that, namely, needed for the replacement of the labour-value of the competition wages which the employer is obliged to pay out of the product—should be as short as possible, and that the time of extra labour—that, namely which produces surplus value for the benefit of the capitalist and his confederates—should be as long as possible. What the capitalist as an individual, and the capitalist and upper class as a class strive for, is that the workers should work as hard as possible whilst they are at it, and that their hours of labour should be as long as human nature will bear.

This is natural enough from the point of view of individual greed and class antagonism. For let anyone consider the gain involved. Say, for instance, that a capitalist is employing a dozen men at the rate of three shillings a day assumed above, and that as before each of these men can replace the value of that three shillings by the expenditure of his labour-force during the first five hours of his days' work. If the employer can compel the twelve labourers

and bearing beasts, be scant able to sustain and again so necessary toil that without it no commonwealth were able to continue and endure one year, should get so hard and poor a living and live so wretched and miserable a life that the state and condition of the labouring beast may seem much better and wealthier? More's "Utopia," chap. xii.

to work not five, but eight hours additional at the same average rate, why then he pockets each day not sixty hours, but actually eight times twelve, that is ninety-six hours of extra and unpaid for labour-value against the sixty hours of paid labour-value at the supposed rate of three shillings a day. As a matter of fact the proportion of unpaid to paid labour provided by the working classes is at the present time far greater than this. But in this simple illustration we can see how all-important it is for the class which employs labour in production only in order to obtain a profit that the day's work should be as long as they can make it, and that the labour too should be as intense as they can make it.

Reduce also the cost or the amount of the labourer's necessaries, reduce, that is, the price of his daily maintenance, or his "standard of life" and, inasmuch as he can replace this lessened value in fewer hours work, more surplus value remains for the capitalist. A brief history of the struggle between the working class and the capitalist class as to the length of a day's work will be given later.* Meanwhile the following is worthy of close attention by all who wish to understand the crushing oppression which is justified by the middle-class economy. Let it never be forgotten that the means of production, the constant capital, exist in the hands of a class only in order that with each ounce of work that is employed a proportional amount of unpaid labour may be embodied in surplus value for the benefit of the easy classes. It is the business of the capitalist to get out of his capital the largest possible amount of extra labour. The time during which the labourer works is the length

* ...y's work is very vague; it may be long or short. "An Essay ... and Commerce," London, 1770.

of time that the capitalist uses up the labour-force which he has bought. If the wage-earner uses for himself any part of the time, this is robbery of the capitalist. The capitalist then appeals to the law of the exchange of commodities. He seeks, like every other purchaser, to get the greatest amount of advantage out of the useful value of his commodity he possibly can. But all of a sudden the labourer, whose voice has hitherto been drowned in the hubbub of production, cries out in turn—The commodity I sold you is different from the mass of other commodities, because its employment creates value, and a value, furthermore, greater than itself has cost. For that very reason you bought it. What is for you increase of capital, for me is crushing overwork. You and I know but one law, that of the exchange of commodities. The right to use up the commodity belongs to the buyer who buys, not to the seller who sells. The use of my labour-force therefore belongs to you. But as the price of its daily sale, I ought to be able to reproduce it and sell it afresh. Allowance being made for age and other causes of deterioration, I ought to be as vigorous and capable to recommence my work to-morrow as I am to-day. You are eternally preaching to me the gospel of thrift, abstinence, and economy. Excellent. I wish, like a wise and prudent manager, to be thrifty of my entire and only fortune, my own labour-force, and to renounce all extravagance therewith. I wish to set in motion each day, to turn into labour, in a word to expend, only just so much of it as is precisely compatible with its average duration and regular development. By an unreasonable extension of the day's work, you can set in motion a greater proportion of my labour-force than I can replace in three days. What you gain in labour I lose in manly vigour. Therefore the

employment of my labour-force, and its wholesale robbery, are two very different matters. If the average age of a labourer, given a reasonable average of work, is thirty years, the average value of my labour-force which you pay me every day is represented by the fraction $\frac{1}{365 \times 30} = \frac{1}{10950}$ of its total value. If you use it up in ten years, very well, you only pay in that case $\frac{1}{10950}$ each day, whereas you ought to pay me $\frac{1}{365 \times 10} = \frac{1}{3650}$; that is to say, you only pay me one-third of the value of my day's work; you literally rob me every day of two-thirds of the value of my only commodity—force of labour. * You pay for a labour-force of one day when you use up a labour-force of three days. You break our contract and the law of exchange. I demand, therefore, a day's work of proper length, and I demand it without appealing to your heart, for in business there is no room for sentiment. You may be a model capitalist, very likely a member of the society for the protection of animals, and a prize-philanthropist living in the odour of sanctity into the bargain. A fig for all that. What you represent over against me has no vitals; what seems to beat there are the pulsations of my own heart. I demand the fair day's labour simply because, like any other bargainer, I want the value of my own commodity." †

† Marx, p. 100.

* Hitherto we have followed this overwhelmingly unjust system of exchange: the workmen have given the capitalist the labour of a whole year in exchange for the value of half a year, and thence, and not from a supposed inequality in the physical and intellectual powers of individuals, has come the inequality of wealth and power. The inequality of exchanges, the difference in the prices of purchases and sales, can exist only on the condition that the capitalists remain for ever capitalists, and the workmen workmen—the one a class of tyrants, the other a class of slaves. . . . This transaction proves clearly, therefore, that the capi-

Over-work is not confined to the capitalist system of production. Wherever one class possesses the means of production, the worker, whether he is free or not, is bound to work, not only for his own maintenance, but for that of the owner of the means of production, who, of course, in the majority of cases, lives far better than the labourer.* The Roman citizen, the feudal baron, the American slave-owner, the modern landowner and capitalist, each and all live on other men's labour. When, however, society is constituted economically in such wise that value in use and not value in exchange is the object of production, over-work is not carried to nearly such a pitch. But the moment the one idea of all production is profit, then over-work is pushed to its extreme limits. It becomes a question not of getting articles for use, but to grind out of men as much surplus value as possible.

A slave must necessarily work some portion of his day in order to replace the value of the day's food he consumes, of the wear-and-tear of his tools and clothes, &c. But as all the product belongs to his master the portion of the day during which he is, so to say, working for himself is disregarded, and the whole day seems devoted to working for another. In the modern state of society where a man

talists and property owners only give the workman in return for his work of a week a portion of the wealth they have obtained from him the week before, that is, they give him nothing for something. The whole transaction between the labourer and the capitalist is a mere farce: it is, in fact, in thousands of instances, no other than a barefaced though legal robbery. Charles Bray, "Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy," Leeds, 1839, p. 49. It is strange that Marx who quotes this passage—upon which the quotation in the text is manifestly founded—in his "Misère de la Philosophie," never refers to Charles Bray in the "Capital" at all.

* Each labourer in all civilized societies maintains many persons. Hodgskin, p. 51.

works for wages under freedom of contract the whole of his labour *seems* to be fairly paid for, no matter how many hours he works, or how much unpaid surplus labour-value his employer may grind out of him. In the one case necessary and unnecessary labour, reproduction of the value of necessary food, &c., and surplus value—are all lumped together in the entire product of forced work; in the other case necessary and unnecessary labour are lumped together as the paid work of the free workman.* Yet in both instances the owner of the means of production owns likewise the entire product when completed, and the labourer, whether bond or free, works, on the average, for the bare necessaries of life in the social conditions of his time.

If a labourer reproduces the value of his wages in the first one-third of his day's work on the farm, in the mine, or in the factory, then during his whole time every stroke he does is one-third for himself and two-thirds for the employing class. Or, to put it in another way, he has the produce of two days' work in the week for himself, and four days' work goes for nothing to the employers—or rather goes to them, as a middle-class economist would say, for organising his labour or for wages of superintendence.

In slavery or serfdom no such economical sophistry is thought necessary. There the hard-hearted truth appears in all its nakedness, that the worker is compelled to do so much work for his master or feudal superior by stripes or starvation.

* The slave in the West Indies and in the Southern States was, on the average, fed far better, even in the worst times, than the English agricultural labourer. By the law of 1829, he was to work only 45 hours a week in the West Indies, when our wage slaves were working unlimited hours on worse food.

There is a comparison at hand which makes the matter easily intelligible. Under the old system of forced labour or *corvée* a man was obliged to give one or two days' work in the week to his feudal lord without any return. Such a man, though he had the other five or six days wholly to himself, we now consider to have been practically a slave. But under the capitalist system a labourer is actually forced to give to the owners of the means of production and their hangers-on — the landowners, capitalists, bankers, profit-mongers, bond-holders, mortgagees, lawyers, merchants, to the bourgeoisie in short—four days' work in the week without receiving any payment for it. Yet this man is called free though he gives four times as much labour for nothing in the week to his employer as the serf, who works gratuitously for one day in the week, is obliged to give his lord in unpaid labour. But the forced, extra, unpaid labour for the capitalist class escapes notice under the wages system, though the industrial *corvée* is really four times greater than the other, and in the example given the capitalist is four times as heavy a master as the feudal lord.

This is the system which gained complete predominance in English production at the end of the eighteenth century. Capital represents, therefore, an epoch in social production, and expresses a whole system of definite social relations. It does not exert its full power until the instruments of production are concentrated in the hands of one class, who then necessarily can obtain possession of all future improvements; whilst the members of another class, deprived of the means of production, either as individuals or as parts of the community, are obliged to sell their force of labour in the market in order to gain, on the average, but a bare subsistence, and render more and more surplus value—rent,

profit, interest—to those who buy their labour and live upon it.* Never at any previous period has capital in this form obtained complete control of any human society; yet what is really in the present shape only two hundred years old is frequently spoken of as eternal; and the competitive ideas which are the necessary growth of the society in which we live, just as the ideas of personal superiority and ecclesiastical hierarchy were the ideas of the middle ages, are applied to all the centuries, and treated as if they must necessarily be permanent.

Unfortunately the full explanation of surplus value, the exposition of how it is that, under the guise of freedom, the workers hand over the bulk of the value they produce to other classes for nothing was not fully given until within the last twenty or five-and-twenty years. Even now the overwhelming majority of employers and employed are either ignorant of the truth or cannot understand it. Had mankind seen two or three hundred years ago, or even a hundred years ago, that the growth of capital, the increased socialisation of labour, and the extension of exchange at the command of the individual, could not but mean the slavery of the producing class, some remedy might have been provided to control the development for the common good. But in a class struggle it is not reason but force that wins the day. From the date of about a hundred years ago force, economical, social, and political, became more and more at the disposal of capitalists either in one way or another. Their power extended over the whole field with a rapidity quite unexampled in the records of any other age or country; and before any steps were taken to regulate the process in

* The capitalist system in ancient Rome so vividly depicted by Mommsen was different in kind, though similar in effects produced.

the interests of the nation at large, the class struggle which hitherto has been the necessary companion or fore-runner of all progress had begun. The endeavours of the middle class to obtain control of the political, as they practically had of the economical, and in the strict sense social sphere of action, were accompanied by hopeless efforts to keep back their extending power from below. A fight between the proletariat and the middle class has kept pace step by step with the more manifest antagonism between the capitalist or mercantile class and the landowner.

All was now ready for the introduction of machine industry in England, but by the light of the above explanations of the simpler phenomena relating to surplus value, the whole evolution will be followed more easily ; and the risings of the workers against the capitalists, their apparently meaningless destruction of machinery, their furious insistance upon the right of combination, barely won as yet, their efforts for a reasonable day's work, can at least be cleared from calculated middle-class misrepresentation. Individual competition unregulated either by collective ordinance or by any thought for the general good governs alike production and exchange under the laissez-faire capitalist system of "freedom of contract." This freedom of contract is still accepted as the economical gospel by the leaders of our political parties and our principal political economists, though all can see that the tendency of the modern legislation carried out by these very statesmen and economists is in direct opposition to their own theories. Such is the irony of our modern society, the one object of the possessing classes being not to understand and prepare for the necessary evolution, but to disguise it and retard it to the fullest extent possible.

CHAPTER V.

THE GROWTH OF THE PROLETARIAT.

THE social and industrial history of England from the year 1750 or thereabouts divides itself into two periods, though properly speaking of course it forms one continuous record. But assuming a division for the purpose of greater convenience in dealing with the facts, the first period would extend from the introduction of machinery up to the repeal of the Corn Laws and the collapse of the Chartist and Socialist movement — that is from 1760 to 1848: the second would reach from 1848 to the present date. The political history of the time must necessarily be dealt with separately. Great as was the effect upon this country of the revolt of the American colonies, of the French Revolution, and the long war which followed, the change in the method of production which was going on all the while was even more important, and brought about in the long run still more serious results.

In England our revolution at the end of the last century was industrial; whilst that of France was in the main political, and that of Germany philosophical. Each no doubt has ultimately reacted upon the other, but it is possible to follow the course of the development of the great machine industry in England, the growth of the powerful capitalist class on the one hand, and of the proletariat or hand-to-mouth wage-earners on the other, without reference to what went on,

either across the channel or on the other side of the Atlantic. England is the classic land of capitalist production; yet, strange to say, the record and criticism of what we have done has been written almost exclusively by foreigners, so far as the condition of the real supporters of that and of every other system of production—the labourers—is concerned. There has been some marked influence running through the whole period which has prevented our middle-class writers themselves from thoroughly examining the true condition of our people. England possesses parliamentary papers and blue books which contain most valuable facts and most accurate information on all subjects connected with the welfare of the mass of the people; but these, when they run counter to received middle-class notions, are thrown aside into the lumber room, only the manner in which the wealth produced by the workers is absorbed by the idlers being thought worthy the attention of our economists and statesmen.

A hundred years or a little more ago, England resembled in many respects the other nations of Europe. Although our commercial marine was already preponderant, the people of this country like the people of France and Germany lived for the most part in the rural districts, and much of the manufacture was carried on in the agricultural villages scattered over the face of the land. Great Britain was then actually a corn-exporting country. The agricultural labourers, and the skilled artisans who worked in the country, were also far better off than the similar class in France; and the poor laws liberally administered, as they then were, kept the more needy from absolute want, maintain a reasonable rate of wages and recognised the right of women and children born into these islands to be pro with food enough to keep them in health ar

There is nothing whatever to show that the physical condition of the people had begun seriously to deteriorate at the time spoken of. On the contrary there is every reason to believe that the mass of the workers had better wages in proportion to the price of food just before the beginning of the American war than they had been in enjoyment of for some long years previously. Moreover there were still commons left which the householder could turn to account, though private enclosure bills were being passed through the landlord legislature almost as fast as they could be drafted. The reasons urged for this process of enclosure were specious, but their results have been very disastrous for the great body of country labourers.

Grave drawbacks therefore, as undoubtedly there were, to the whole system of parish settlement, which confined the workers to the region where they were born if they wished to obtain some provision for themselves or their children in sickness or old age; preposterous as seem to us the arrangements whereby the territorial magnates and their parsons were masters of all they surveyed; iniquitous as we may deem the disfranchisement of those whose labour supplied the privileged classes with their luxuries, and the violence and political corruption by which these privileged classes maintained their supremacy; nevertheless, when every possible allowance is made, we cannot but admit that in the main there was far less misery and far less physical deterioration during the middle of the eighteenth century in proportion to the population than there is to-day. Men and women were still fed almost as well as horses or mules, and the idea that starvation was a sure remedy for poverty had not yet become the accepted creed of the well-to-do.

It needs, however, an effort of the imagination to recall

what England was in the lifetime of the fathers of men now living. Though the statistics of the period were very imperfect, it is scarcely possible that the population of England and Wales in 1750 exceeded 6,500,000, and as already stated fully 5,000,000 of these lived in the agricultural districts or small country towns. London had a population of about 700,000. But comparatively small as the population was, compared with what it is to-day, the difficulty of communication rendered it still more scattered than it had been a few generations earlier. The common roads throughout England and Wales up to the end of the last century were inconceivably bad. The traditions of road-making had completely died out, and home trade was consequently hampered to an extent which almost drove our manufacturers to seek foreign markets in preference to our own. Throughout the south of England the roads were abominable, and country produce in some parts could not be transported at all save in exceptionally good weather. In Lancashire matters were quite as bad. Arthur Young's description of the road between Preston and Wigan in 1770 has become almost too trite for quotation, yet the contrast it affords is so striking that no other will serve so well. "I know not," says this experienced traveller, "I know not in the whole range of language of terms sufficiently expressive to describe this infernal road. To look over a map and perceive that it is a principal one, not only to some towns, but even whole counties, one would naturally conclude it to be at least decent; but let me most seriously caution all travellers who may accidentally purpose to travel this terrible county (Lancashire) to avoid it as they would the devil, for a thousand to one they break their necks or their limbs by overthrows or breakings-down. They will

here meet with ruts, which I actually measured, four feet deep, and floating with mud only from a wet summer—what therefore must it be after a winter? The only mending it receives in places is the tumbling in some loose stones which serve no other purpose but jolting a carriage in a most intolerable manner. These are not only opinions but facts, for I actually passed three carts broken down in these eighteen miles of execrable memory." Throughout the kingdom the roads were little better, fast coaches being quite unknown until many years later.

The same traveller found the average rate of agricultural wages the whole year through, in 1768, to be 10s. 9d. a week within twenty miles of London; 7s. 8d. a week, between twenty and sixty miles of London; 6s. 4d. a week at from sixty to a hundred miles distant; and 6s. 3d., at a distance of one hundred and ten to a hundred and seventy miles. In the north of England, in 1770, he found that the wages averaged about 7s. a week within two or three hundred miles of London. These figures show a considerable advance on the wages of the previous century, whilst the price of wheat and meat had fallen greatly. It has been calculated that in 1764, wheaten bread was eaten throughout England except in the northern and some of the north midland counties, and that all the poor could afford meat at least twice a week, while beer was plentiful and cheap.* Thus it is put almost beyond dispute that notwithstanding the defective state of the roads the people were on the whole well-fed, whilst the law rents of rural wealth [illegible] than in the seventeenth century.†

* 'Econ.' Vol. II. Appendix I.

† In 1795, when as an article of trade was scarcely known in this

As with the labourers, so with the artisans and craftsmen; they, too, though mere wage-earners, had not yet felt in any marked degree the pressure of machine competition, or the "over-population" which thence resulted. Their successful strikes on more than one occasion, prove that the masters had not yet gained the upper hand entirely. The mere fact that the majority of the trades were carried on in the country districts, secured for the workers and their children fairly good health and reasonable amusement. They were almost as ignorant and servile as the agricultural labourers, but the cottage-industry and family industry did not at this time involve, as a rule, the physical mischiefs which the great factory industry brought with it. The spinners, weavers, &c., were in the main stout vigorous folk, with healthy children, differing little in this respect also, from the agricultural labourers around them. The wife and daughters of the spinners, for instance, spun the yarn which the husband wove, or sold, and with their patch of land to cultivate, these people made a fair subsistence.

With the introduction of the spinning-jenny, the industrial revolution began. This invention is generally attributed to Hargreaves, whose machine first came into use in 1764, and in an improved form three years later. But Hargreaves himself, though a man of great mechanical genius, did but carry out ideas which had been imported from Italy and Germany, as well as worked up to in England. The spinning machine of Wyalt, the clever improvement of John Kay and Robert Kay, in wool as well as

country, and the whole manufacture, which was very limited, was confined to the supply of the home market. *Cotton cloth then cost considerably more than linen, and cotton stockings were then nearly as dear as silk.* Hodgskin, p. 71.

cotton spinning, besides the work of Highs, whom Arkwright so shamelessly robbed—all helped to bring about the change.* The demand for yarn, arising out of the growing fustian manufacture which was established in Manchester as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, gave an impulse to invention in the first instance. Spinners, up to the invention of the jenny, which afterwards grew into the mule, were able, where the weaver could not employ his own family, to command high wages. With the introduction of this machine more yarn could be delivered at a much cheaper rate, the weaver found a greater demand for his wares, and shortly afterwards a weaver and his family could earn as much as four pounds a week or more, at this now very remunerative trade. At this period and for a few years after it must be remembered the markets greatly expanded, and England began to compete with home manufacture in India, and all over the world; whilst our statesmen of both parties considered that the Colonial market for manufactures ought to be entirely under our control.

In consequence of this great and sudden increase of wages, the weavers resolved to make hay while the sun shone. They had no more time for cultivation of their bits of land, and became simple weavers without any other occupation whatever — plain "hands," or working men. This also changed the relation of the spinner to the weaver. Spinning now gradually became quite a separate branch of the business, instead of being combined with the weaving under one roof. But this was merely a commencement. Very soon capitalists began to build large factories which

* The *watchmaker*, Watt, invented the steam engine; the *barber* the mule; and the *goldsmith*, Fulton, the steamboat. ital," p. 211.

contained many jennys driven by water-power. These soon led to further improvements in the machinery, and the production of yarn cheaper and cheaper, reducing the rate of wages for the hand-spinner, who found it quite impossible to compete against the constant improvements and consequent reduction in the price of yarn. Arkwright's plagiarisms pushed the change on still faster, but his organisation of labour did still more to enhance the effect of these discoveries and improvements. In 1785, Crompton and Arkwright introduced still greater changes in the now developed manufacture, and at this very period Watt's steam-engine came into play. Before the century was out, Cartwright's weaving process by machinery crushed the hand-loom weavers, as the jenny had beaten the spinners. The mere manual labourers saw their bread literally taken out of their mouths by the machines, which soon obtained complete mastery of the cotton industry. This amounted to a complete revolution in the whole trade. The prices of all manufactured goods fell at once; trade and industry flourished exceedingly; the foreign markets were completely overwhelmed with English products; there was at the same time a marvellous increase of capital and national wealth. But the increase for the hand-to-mouth wage-earners was even more rapid. Every security for employment, every tittle of property, was taken from the working class, and their condition of existence gradually became more and more deplorable.

Steam and water power confirmed the victory gained by the machines. For in the meanwhile other circumstances were favourable to the formation of a class of wage-earners entirely at the disposal of the capitalists. In agriculture the new application of chemistry and manures, the increased

market which even the rise of the town population created for agricultural products tended to enlarge the size of the farms, to uproot the small tenants, and to decrease the number of those who could afford to combine a little tillage with their spinning or weaving. The few yeomen who were still left now utterly disappeared in the face of the competition brought to bear upon them by the larger capital of their neighbours and the improved methods of culture, beside which their old happy-go-lucky methods appeared as hopeless as they really were. Thus these people also were forced into the towns, there to find themselves in the power of the capitalist class to an extent which none then fully understood.

Meanwhile the population was increasing rapidly. Between 1750 and 1795 the population of England and Wales had risen from 6,500,000 to nearly 9,000,000; and that Irish immigration had begun which was to avenge upon the poorer class of our workers, by its terrible competition for the lowest rate of wages, the miserable misgovernment we had for centuries inflicted upon that unhappy island. The condition of the people became steadily worse and worse, though the marvellous increase in the power of production, owing to the new machinery and the new motive power, far surpassed the increase of population, and enabled the country to bear without exhaustion the heavy burdens of the wars with America and France.* It was the spinning-

* As in the case of the spendthrift, while all these causes were in operation there was an appearance of prosperity, and those who were profiting from this state of things were anxious to keep up the delusion. That it was no more than delusion will be at once apparent to all who examine below the surface, and who inquire as to the condition of poverty and wretchedness into which the great mass of the people were then plunged. In some few cases there had been an advance of wages,

jenny and the steam engine, the furious absorption of the labour of men, women, and children by the all-devouring greed of the new capitalist class, which gave the nation the wealth to make head against the most formidable combinations that were got together against us. For the improvement in the cotton industry was not confined to mere spinning and weaving; its other branches received an equal impulse; bleaching, dyeing, and printing all felt the effects of the new methods of manufacture, and chemistry lent its aid in this direction with even more success than in agriculture.

The woollen industry followed in the same direction. This, the oldest and most prosperous of English manufactures, had always been most carefully fostered by the successive governments, as well by prohibition of the export of raw wool as by ordinances which enforced the wearing of certain descriptions of woollen apparel of English make. But all the efforts of government were trifling beside the result produced by the new processes. Nothing, also, is more remarkable, from the commencement of the introduc-

but this occurred only to skilled artisans, and even with them the rise was wholly incommensurate with the increased cost of all the necessaries of life. . . . . If we contrast the weekly wages at the two periods of 1790 and 1800 of husbandry labourers and of skilled artisans, measuring them both by the quantity of wheat they could command, it will be seen that the former could in 1790 purchase 82 pints of wheat and in 1800 could procure no more than 53 pints; while the skilled artisan who in 1790 could buy 169 pints could procure in 1800 only 83 pints. To talk of the prosperous state of the country under such a condition of things involves a palpable contradiction (Porter's "Progress of the Nation," p. 478). The misfortune is that middle-class economists will persist in attributing the miserable state of the labourers solely to external causes or to their excessive propagation. Some wiseacres even propose to improve the condition of mankind at large by limiting the procreation of producers by mechanical devices.

tion of the great machine industry up to the present time, than the steady relative decrease in the population of the agricultural districts and the concentration of the workers in the towns. This was specially the case, of course, in Lancashire and Yorkshire, where the cotton and woollen industries were carried on. Even at the end of the eighteenth century these industries were quite in their infancy, and cities which now are great and flourishing were then but villages.

Linen and silk manufactures progressed in like manner and with almost equal rapidity. The impulse once given spread in every direction and through every branch of industry, necessarily creating in succession new departments of human labour. The very fact that so many discoveries were made at the same time greatly intensified their collective influence.* Steam power needed coal for its employment, and machinery called for immense supplies of wrought iron. Such vast profits were made that human ingenuity exhausted itself in pushing forward the development with the utmost energy. The same vigour that was shown in war abroad was displayed in industry at home. The rapid opening up of the coal and iron districts of the north followed, which, from the year 1780, have become more and more important elements in the accumulation of national wealth. The iron deposits had up to this time been scarcely worked, the little that had been produced being almost exclusively charcoal iron, but now large smelting-furnaces were erected in the North of England, and the iron-industry began to assume the importance which it has ever since retained. The increased consumption of raw wool, cotton, flax, and silk,

* Porter's Progress of the Nation. Engels' Die Lage der Arbeitenden asse in England.

reacted again upon the commercial marine, and called for fresh vessels, alike for export and import. Gas and railways told later in the same direction, and pushed on still faster the furious development of wealth. In a hundred ways was this general whirl of improvement felt, and the demand for agricultural produce increased more and more, still further thrusting out the small cultivator from the soil by the necessity for using more capital in the business. Thus, in every department, larger and larger amounts of capital were needed to undertake the business of production, owing to the increasing scale upon which manufacture, mining, and farming had to be carried on.

It was not, however, until the commencement of the present century that the improvement of internal communication began to keep pace with the growth of production. Canals were the first engineering works recognised as of the highest importance, and some of the greatest enterprises were completed at the end of the eighteenth century: turnpike roads on scientific principles came next, and railways with steam power were first opened in 1830. Thus, as has been well said, in sixty or eighty years, from 1780 to 1848, the history of English production underwent a change, the like of which had never been seen in the civilised world before. A country, like other countries, with small towns, limited and simple industry, and a stupid but relatively large agricultural population had become a country like no other, with a metropolis of three millions of inhabitants, with colossal manufacturing towns, with a world-embracing industry and commerce, a hard-working, densely crowded population, two-thirds of whom were engaged in manufacturing industry, forming another nation, with other ideas and other needs than its predecessors.

There was as much difference between the England of 1780 and the England of 1848 as between the France of the ancien regime and the France of the '48 Republic.* By that time our modern working class had been formed by the action of the causes rapidly sketched. Henceforth, once a wage-earner the worker had, as a rule, no other prospect than to be a wage-earner for life.

But while this marvellous increase of the resources of our country was going on, the power of production being multiplied out of all proportion to the growth of the population, no steps whatever were taken to regulate the handling of this new machinery or these new industries in the interest of the people at large. War, bad seasons, and the consequent high prices of the necessaries of life put the mass of the workers in a most miserable state before the end of the eighteenth century. Whilst the wages of a few skilled workmen rose slightly, the cost of living increased by much more than one half, and the wages of agricultural and unskilled labourers did not exceed seven shillings a week. This meant bare subsistence, ever close upon the starvation point. But for the humane manner in which the Poor Law was administered, and the competition among the workers modified by grants in aid of wages, the indifference on the part of Government to the industrial revolution which was taking place would have produced yet more serious results. Everything told against the workers; alike the increase of population, the introduction of machinery, the rise in the price of food, the larger style of farming, the bitter competition in the towns; and all told in favour of the capitalists who got their science for practically nothing from the Dalton's and Davy's, and took care to get their

* Engels' Die Lage der Arbeitenden Klasse in England, p. 35. 1845.

labour cheap, bringing in women and children as soon as possible to work them to excess.

So early as 1796 Dr Percival in his resolutions submitted to the Manchester Board of Health, pointed out the deteriorating effect of factory work upon all who are driven to accept it. He says, "the large factories are generally injurious to the constitutions of those employed in them, even where no particular diseases prevail, from the close confinement which is enjoined, from the debilitating effects of hot or impure air, and from the want of the active exercises which nature points out as essential in childhood and growth to invigorate the system, and to fit our species for the employments and duties of manhood. The untimely labour of the night, and the protracted labour of the day, with respect to children, not only tends to diminish future expectations as to the general sum of life and industry, by impairing strength and destroying the vital stamina of the rising generation, but it too often gives encouragement to idleness, extravagance, and profligacy, in the parents who, contrary to the order of nature, subsist by the oppression of their offspring." This introduction of women and children's labour produced of itself a fearful state of things in every direction. But the first effect alone was bad enough for the adult male workers. "The small amount of wages," says Mr Saunders, writing many years after Dr Percival, "paid to women acts as a strong inducement to the mill occupiers to employ them instead of men," and they are, he adds, "more easily induced to undergo severe labour."

Now, what is the first result economically, to the male workers, of this employment of women and children by the capitalists? It is manifest that labour, applied to natural objects, being the source of exchange value, and surplus

value or the appropriation of the results of unpaid labour the sole source of profit, interest, &c., the capitalist, in order to make his capital breed satisfactorily to himself and his hangers-on, henceforth as heretofore, must be sure of always finding upon the market destitute labourers ready to sell their labour-force to him in return for subsistence wages. So long as men alone offer their labour-force for sale, their wages must therefore cover the keep of their wives and children according to the average standard of life in which they have been brought up, otherwise the destitute bargainers of to-day would have no successors to-morrow, and the capitalist would find no labour-force to purchase and exploit. But the employment of women and children entirely changes the whole basis of the contract between the competition wage-earners, and the owners of the means of production. From that time onwards, a man's foes are literally they of his own household. The admitted law is that the whole family would on the average be kept by the wages of its head in the standard of their class, handing on the same lot to an equal number of the offspring. But when women and children are brought in to compete with their labour-force against the labour of the men, the whole family together earns, on the average, no more than the father alone would earn if they were not allowed to enter the field against him. Of course in cases where parental affection and family duty utterly failed, as the Reports of the Children's Employments Commission show they too often did, in cases, that is, where fathers and mothers literally sold their children into the most cruel and revolting slavery—then a few extra shillings a week might be got by individual fathers or mothers; but the baneful result to them as a class was the same.

"At this time," writes Robert Owen, speaking of the end of the last century and the beginning of this, "children were admitted into the cotton, wool, flax, and silk mills at six and sometimes even at five years of age. The time of working was unlimited by law, but *usually* it was fourteen hours a day, in some fifteen, and even by the most inhuman and avaricious sixteen hours, and in many cases the mills were artificially heated to a high state most unfavourable to health." What is worse, these unfortunate babes were continually flogged at their tasks, were very insufficiently fed, and were always at the disposal of their owners for any purpose that might seem good to them. A more horrible state of things than the capitalists of England as a class created for the workers, in the days when, having cleared away all the restrictions of the Middle Ages on reduction of wages or overwork, they had full power to take advantage of the freedom of contract they throve by, and could grind women and children into an early grave for their profit, never disgraced a civilized community. Their dead machinery was always maintained in the most perfect condition, and provided with all that was needed to keep it in the most perfect working order, their horses and mules received sufficient provender, good grooming, and spacious stables in return for average work. This "paid"—but the living human machinery, how did that fare? That was ever starved and stunted: there were more white slaves where the others came from. What mattered whether children lived or died? their only function in free England was to provide gain for the capitalist class, and society with the means of gratifying extravagance and indulging in luxury. Having acquired their wealth by greed, good luck, and utter unscrupulousness, the capitalists had not the slightest

mercy upon the people who, by their unpaid labour, provided them with their fortunes. In 1802 the first law was passed against wholesale ruination of the children. To no purpose. It took years to rouse the country to the infamies which were being committed, or to enforce a remedy—nay, the remedy, as will be seen in the sequel, is not yet applied.

It was in 1802, also, that the journeymen calico-printers first applied to Parliament for redress; and nothing is more noteworthy than their confidence that their complaints would be fairly heard and their grievances redressed. They even abandoned their combinations, and a committee was appointed to examine their case. This committee declared that recent legislation "had operated only in favour of the strong and against the weak."* "Everything is made subservient to the interest of the masters, and exclusively, too; for the diminution of expense, considerable as it is, the manufacture arising out of their multiplication of apprentices at reduced wages, and the introduction of machinery, do not appear to have produced any reduction whatever in the price of the fabric to the consumer." In Spitalfields affairs were even worse.

For unfortunately, the same class which had brought about this shameful state of things, the rich manufacturing class, whose sole idea of national prosperity is and always has been the increase of their own wealth, exercised a steady pressure on Parliament in favour of the complete removal of all restrictions upon bare competitive wages and in the abrogation of those laws, dating from the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and renewed in the very reign of George III., which empowered Courts to fix a living rate of wages as

* Howell, p. 108.

between employers and employed. The law as it existed was unworkable, and led to furious strife between the two classes. The workers wished the statute to be thoroughly amended, the employers, of course, wished it entirely repealed in order that they might have the labourers completely at their mercy. Petitions were presented to the number of 300,000 in favour of the statute; for its repeal 2000. All the witnesses examined were opposed to the repeal.* "Notwithstanding the opposition of the workmen, and in spite of the evidence against repeal, the master manufacturers obtained the victory in 1814, when, after a contest of nearly one hundred years, the 5 Elizabeth, c. 4, was abrogated by 56 George III., c. 96, and the industrial system, which was as old as the craft-guilds, was abolished for all trades, as it had previously been for the woollen manufactures. The chief reason for the repeal of this statute on the part of the employers, was that the seven years' apprenticeship restricted the number of the workmen, and thereby enabled them to combine with success against their masters, and they asserted that 'the persons most competent to form regulations, with respect to trade, were the master manufacturers'"! "Thus," adds Mr Howell, and the fact is irrefragable, "the statute was repealed in the interest of the employers." The minority altogether outweighed the majority. "The workmen had no voice in this interference with long established law and custom; the employers, on the other hand, were well represented and all powerful."

What, however, was the effect of this repeal brought about by the wealthy in their own interest? It is distinctly stated in an official report that by the growth of the system

* Howell, p. 113.

of 'sweaters' and half-pay apprentices the journeymen were driven to famine, and the female workers to prostitution, which distressing circumstances never occurred whilst the statute of 5 Elizabeth was in force.* Mr Pitt saw clearly years before what would happen, and his wise remarks on the Arbitration Bill might be a lesson to the Conservative leaders of to-day:—"The time will come," he said, "when manufactures will have been so long established, and the operatives not having any other business to flee to, that it will be in the power of any one man in a town to reduce the wages, and all the other manufacturers must follow. If ever it does arrive at this pitch, Parliament, if it be not then sitting, ought to be called together, and if it cannot redress your grievances its power is at an end. Tell me not that Parliament cannot —its power is omnipotent to protect." Omnipotent to oppress, unfortunately, when in the hands of the dominant class, until the proletariat can force it to surrender. Despairing of Parliament the workmen were forced to combine, and their combinations were partially, but only partially, successful.

"Whatever may be said to the contrary," continues Owen, himself the most successful manufacturer of his day, "bad and unwise as American slavery is, and must continue to be, the white slavery in the manufactories of England was at this unrestricted period far worse than the slaves whom I afterwards saw in the West Indies and in the United States, and in many respects, especially as regards health, food, and clothing, the latter were much better provided for than were the oppressed and degraded

ldren and work-people in the home manufactories of

* Report of 1818.

Great Britain."* It was through this wholesale, relentless enslavement of the weak at home that capitalism in England gained strength, as by piracy, murder, and slavery, both abroad and at home, it had come into existence. The children were actually sold as "apprentices" out of the London workhouses to be used as mere machines by the great Lancashire manufacturers. There, as official report after official report shows, these helpless little creatures, with none to care for them, and none to miss their loss, with no law and no morality to check their inhuman slave-drivers—whose sons and daughters now figure as the mercantile aristocracy of England—were treated worse than any slaves of whom there is any record whatsoever. †

The Report of the Select Committee on the state of children employed in manufactures of the year 1816 shows clearly the horrors that went on. At that date the manufacturers rose one after another and declared that it was in nowise injurious to employ babes of seven, eight, nine and ten years old in the mills for sixteen hours a day. ‡ Every effort was made to burke the whole discussion. Women at this time were working in some factories at the rate of eighteen hours a day. No wonder that in 1863 Mr Ferrand could declare that in ninety years the cotton industry of Lancashire had devoured nine generations of work-people. The physical and moral deterioration which followed upon this unbounded exploitation of the labour of

* Any system of employment, therefore, that dooms a man to perpetual labour (for that may fairly be called perpetual which admits only of intervals requisite for sleep and meal times), subjects him to the evils of a savage state.—Eden, vol. i. 441, 1798.

† One witness before the Ch. Em. Com. testified that two boys in his employ died in convulsions at their work.

‡ They declared, besides, that child-labour was *not* profitable; though it would kill the cotton industry to do away with it!

men, women, and children was of course most horrible. For, besides the appalling overwork, their food was shamefully bad, and the lodging was even worse than it is now.

The ignorance of the factory population was something inconceivable, for the children grew up without any education whatever. Disease, consumption, typhus, scrofula, besides nervous affections and eatings-away of the bone, and distortions of the joints were common. Where was freedom of contract in all this? To the homeless wanderer it meant but freedom to starve, to the baby of seven years old, sold to the factory lord by his parents or the parish officials, it meant an apprenticeship which left him or her utterly broken down before reaching the age of twenty, if indeed, death did not come in before to release the poor wretch from its sufferings. Cobbett, Carlile, Owen, Sadler, Oastler agitated and protested against these atrocities of the factory system. Already family life was broken up. The mother who wished to attend to her children had no time whatever for her home duties: it was lucky for her if, after less than a week's absence for her confinement, the overseer did not enquire for her and threaten immediate discharge if she did not return. Children, therefore, grew up without the slightest family care or attendance. What wonder that they at once freed themselves from the parental authority when they had the strength to do so? This is, and always has been, a natural result of the whole factory system, and the fearful death-rate among the children is only a portion of the evil. Even up to the present time no really thorough steps have been taken to check the mischiefs which have grown up.

Thus, not only was the resistance of the labourer to the capitalist broken down by the introduction and fearful over-

work of female and child labour, but the arrangements which brought this about served also to ruin the family life on which, as a Christian community, we are supposed to set such store, to sap the health of the rising generation, who constitute the hope of the future, and to deteriorate, perhaps permanently, the real strength and well-being of the nation. And all for what? All in order that, by the aid of improved machinery, the capitalist class and its hangers-on should get more surplus value out of their own "free" countrymen, their wives, their daughters, and their children, than human strength can reasonably provide; all in order that the luxury of the few should grow at the expense of the health and the very lives of the many.

For what profit cannot a capitalist who pays women say five, six, or seven shillings a week for sixteen or eighteen hours work a day, children nothing more than their barest subsistence, and men actual starvation wages, what profit cannot he wring out of their labour? "Not 40 or 50 per cent., but 1000 per cent.," said to me once a cotton manufacturer, "made the fortunes of Lancashire." Yes, it was this unprecedented exhaustion of the human being by the machine that gave the factory owners their wealth far more than even the improvements in the machine itself which enabled them to undersell other countries.

There was, from 1780 onwards, also a constant competition between the machines and the workers, which tended still further to secure the dominance of the capitalist class, and the wealth of themselves and the landowners. The very appearance of the people was enough to tell what was going on. A child who had not a moment free, save to snatch a hasty sleep, or a still more hasty meal, who from earliest youth was worked in a bad atmosphere to the point of the

extremest exhaustion, without any open air exercise, or any enjoyment whatsoever, could not but grow up, if it survived such treatment, a white, bloodless, miserable being. Cripples, deformed, hunchbacks, weak, sickly creatures they in fact became. This was so everywhere—in Manchester and Bradford, in Leeds, Huddersfield, and Glasgow. With the growth of wealth came the growth of inconceivable misery.

Nor, let us forget that the factory owner had, throughout the earlier period I speak of, the completest despotism over the workers when once they had been driven to sell their labour for weekly wages. The cottages which the "hands" dwelt in belonged to the manufacturers; and if the people struck work, or a man rendered himself objectionable, he was turned out into the street at a week's notice. Yet the rents of such cottages, miserable as they were, were high, and the necessity of living in them, in order to get employment, put the workers at the mercy of their employers as absolutely as any system of bondage that was ever invented. Moreover, the truck system, which forced the operative to buy his goods at the manufacturer's own store, thus giving the "organisers of labour" another surreptitious profit out of the wage-earners by means of systematic adulteration and overcharge, was then in full swing; while, even if the wage-earners bought elsewhere, they were quite sure to get only the worst class of goods at the highest price, with probably short weight.

Nothing but the clearest official testimony would lead us to credit the condition of the workers in town and country alike—and their case is little better now—whilst England was becoming the workshop of the world, and the skill of her people was enabling her to bear the burden of a

successful war with half Europe. Drunkenness, debauchery, and filth had full control in many districts. How are modesty and cleanliness possible to boys and girls who sleep and dress with their fathers and mothers in heaps in the same room? Fornication and drink are the only pleasures left to those who are kept day in and day out at a hopelessly degrading toil. Misery, indigestion, bad unnourishing diet drive to alcohol, if only to obtain forgetfulness of the sad surroundings, if only to shut out for a few hours the shrinking horror at the coming of a hopeless morrow to a hopeless day. Yet during this whole period of unrestricted slavery for the poor factory-worker when *laissez-faire* and individual rights of property were being raised to the height of a political and social religion, none thought to check the authority which the factory owners could exert within their unwholesome ill-ventilated mills, or force them to drain their tumble-down high rented cottages.

Every means was allowable which helped to drag more surplus value out of the worker. Fined if a minute late, fined if they sat down, the mill opened a quarter of an hour earlier, shut perhaps half-an-hour later than usual, meal-times restricted to so short a period that the "hands" could barely swallow their food, much less digest it. Such were the indirect ways by which the capitalist class forced more and yet more unpaid labour out of the helpless flesh and blood which had fallen under their remorseless grip. Fine freedom indeed; noble liberty that for which our middle-class ceaselessly strove—the freedom to enslave at will for gain; the liberty to work to death for profit. But for the wage-earning class it meant the choice either to accept the capitalist's conditions—for the poor-law was almost powerless in the towns—or to starve, to freeze, or to shiver

in want and misery like beasts in the forest. In happy times the worker might perhaps get enough to eat and drink as a return for his ceaseless labour, he might be fairly clothed, his existence might be just bearable, but at any moment all might fade from him, and he might find himself—nay, he did find himself constantly him and his —in the bitterest poverty, with not even an unfurnished garret to shelter him from the inclemency of the weather, or a coat to keep him warm.

But these were the days of England's glory; these were the times before and after the great war when she held all Europe at bay; these were the happy years when our "society" was thoroughly established upon its present basis of order and luxury for the rich, of anarchy and misery for the poor. To this very day not even the most skilled artizan can feel secure that a sudden introduction of new machinery, a crisis in his trade, or a bout of sickness will not turn him into an unskilled labourer tramping the highways in search of work, or driven into the workhouse as a pauper. The worker in such a condition is necessarily the slave of the capitalist or middle class as completely as was the captive, the slave to the master, or the serf to the feudal lord. Instead of being at the disposal of this or that individual, he is at the mercy of a class, and sells himself for a day, a week, or a month, instead of being bound for life. Nay, the factory hand under the system of unrestricted free-contract between the employer and the employed was worse off than the serf of seven centuries earlier.

"The Saxon serf of the Norman baron of the twelfth century would have had no need to envy the lot of his free descendant in the nineteenth century. For the serf was *adscriptus glebæ* bound to the soil, but so is the free labourer

by the cottage system. The serf could own no property, all that he earned he held at the disposal of his lord—the free labourer had also no property, could earn none through the pressure of competition, and what the Norman could not do, the manufacturer contrived by means of the truck-system to effect—to reduce even the miserable subsistence by forced trading at a loss. The relations between the serf and the owner of the soil were settled by laws which were observed because they were enforced by the general sense of the society; the relations of the hand to his employer were also ordered by laws which, however, were only enforced in the interest of the master; the lord could not uproot the serf from the soil, nor above all sell him away from it; the modern capitalist class compels the worker to sell himself. The serf was the slave of the land on which he was born; the worker is the slave of his necessary wants and of the money with which he must buy them. The serf had a guarantee for his existence at least in the whole feudal arrangements of which he was a part; the free labourer has no such guarantee because he only holds a definite place in our modern society when the capitalist class wants him, at other times he is not worth consideration. The serf sacrificed himself for his lord in war, the factory hand in peace. The serf's lord was a barbarian who looked upon his churl as live-stock; the free labourer's master is a civilised man and considers him as a machine. Both serf and factory hand in short are slaves, and if either side has the advantage, it is assuredly not the free labourer. Only the slavery of the serf is open, clear, undisguised, the slavery of the modern factory hand is hypocritically disguised and philanthropically defended." *

* F. Engels, Die Lage, &c., p. 225.

Nay more, the Catholic Church with all its faults did its utmost to break down the serfdom and slavery of the Middle Ages, threw its whole weight on this point into the scale of the people. Our modern Roman Catholic Church in common with the Church of England and the sects which are formed outside it, have one and all thrown in their lot with the capitalist class, and have striven to perpetuate a worse slavery than that which the priests and monks of old time strove to uproot. Christianity has meant for our bishops and parsons, our ministers, conventiclers and tub-thumpers the eternal domination of the respectable and the well-to-do who think that those who produce all the wealth should live upon a bare subsistence in order that the owners of the means of production—the law-givers of sacred property ground out of the labour of others—may live in luxury and wear fine clothes.

But it is time to give chapter and verse from official records for the statements made above as to the frightful condition of the working classes in the factory towns during the first sixty or seventy years of the development of the great machine industry. According to the statement of Dr Nathaniel Gould, out of about 23,000 factory hands 14,000 were under the age of eighteen. In the hospital at Manchester in the same year one half of all the sick were scrofulous, whilst in Liverpool, where there were no factories, the proportion who suffered in this way was but one in a hundred. This report in the year 1816 shows also the most infamous treatment of children was the rule at the beginning of the century. Children of five and even of three years old were employed, whilst babes of six were commonly found in all the factories. One magistrate

actually stated that the children were obliged to take emetics in order to get rid of the cotton dust they swallowed. Yet manufacturers vehemently denounced the physicians who described this as unhealthy, and declared that the children throve in the stifling heat. Day and night labour from 12 to 14 and 15 hours was the rule, and in Leeds and other districts it often reached 16 hours.* There was frequently no rest on Sunday, and the children in many mills had to eat their meals as best they might at their task. In the cotton industry in particular this was worst, on account of the horribly unhealthy character of the labour and the excessive duration.

All this time this "light" work of the children at the machines was crushing out the hand-loom weavers as already shown, reducing the wages which could be earned by grown men. The homes of these poor people were but overcrowded lodging houses. The heat of the factories induced an excessively early age for puberty, and children of tender years were married or lived together. "Deprived of the cheering influence of the face of nature, robbed of the pure breath of heaven, cooped up in crowded buildings with the Babel-like sounds of their companions animate and inanimate, their over-strained minds and bodies knew no return to healthy feelings, and they plunged deeper and deeper into the whirlpool till they neither knew their danger, nor, if they did, could they avoid or escape it without a moral discipline or physical regeneration, which, at present, appears if not utterly hopeless, at least very remote."†

The report of 1833, seventeen years later, shows that matters were very little better by that time. In good,

* Report 1816, 89, 382, 96.

† Dr Gaskell, Quoted in Held, p. 626.

well-managed factories round Manchester the labour of children had been reduced to eleven hours a day; but in return the periods for meals had been shortened; whilst in Scotland and the north-east of England 12, 13, 14 hours were still the rule for children.* The ordinary age for children to go to factories was now nine years, but there were still many of 5, 6, and 7 years old working in all parts of England. Nor was this unmeasured abuse of child labour confined to the cotton, silk, or wool industries. It spread in every direction. The profit was so great that nothing could stop its development. The report of 1842 is crammed with statements as to the fearful overwork of girls and boys in iron and coal mines, which doubtless had been going on from the end of the eighteenth century. Children, being small and handy, were particularly convenient for small veins of coal and pits where no great amount of capital was embarked; they could get about where horses and mules could not.† Little girls were forced to carry heavy baskets of coal up high ladders, and little girls and boys dragged the coal bunkers along instead of animals. Women were commonly employed underground at the filthiest tasks.

In the iron mines children of from four to nine years old were dragged out of bed at four or five o'clock in the morning to undergo sixteen hours' work in the shafts, and if they faltered during their fearful labour were mercilessly flogged with leathern straps by the overseer.‡ There were more children employed in these iron mines than even in the coal mines, and this is what the Report says on the general conditions under which they, as well as the older male and female labourers, worked: "When the

* Report 1833, p. 15. † Report 1842. ‡ Ibid. 66, 91, 24.

nature of this horrible labour is taken into consideration, its extreme severity, its regular duration of from 12 to 14 hours daily, which once a week, at least, is extended through the whole of the night; the damp, heated, unwholesome atmosphere in which the work is carried on, the tender age and sex of the workers; when it is considered that such labour is performed not in isolated instances selected to excite compassion, but that it may truly be regarded as the type of everyday existence of hundreds of our fellow-creatures—a picture is presented of daily physical oppression and systematic slavery, of which I conscientiously believe no one unacquainted with such facts would credit the existence of in the British dominions."

In the report of 1843 we find that similar hideous enslavement of babies by the capitalist class was the rule in every single department of industry. Philanthropic Birmingham was employing five-year-old children fifteen hours a day in its metal works, "who were often very hungry." Sheffield and Wolverhampton were nowise behindhand. Actually in the glass factories children were not unfrequently forced to work *eighteen* hours out of the twenty-four. There was literally no limit to the work for children, any more than there was for women or men, beyond the capacity of the human body to go on at its labour. In the lace, in the stocking, in the paper industries the same infamies went on.

Mere infants, crushed with toil, left without education, barely fed sufficiently to keep them strong enough to labour, raised their baby voices in vain to the noble class that still controls England for a little mercy. For all this the Manchester free-traders, the philanthropists of the anti-slavery party, the reform agitators of Birmingham—many of them now living as highly-respected members of our mercantile or

even titular aristocracy—declared to be good and wholesome for the people who worked, highly beneficial to the country at large. Capital had become master, and its only idea of freedom was power to utterly crush the helpless. Of the conditions of existence for the parents of these miserable children, who grew up with stunted frames and swollen feet, it is almost needless to speak at length just now; but in the year 1842 40,000 people lived in cellars in Liverpool, whilst the report of the Poor Law Commissions on the health of the labouring population proves to demonstration that the fearfully high death-rate prevailing among them was due to their miserable lodgment, their bad food and their overwork.

In the five years ending 1844, the mortality in Manchester was 39,992 against 23,777 in Surrey, an excess of over 16,000 against Manchester, though the populations of the city and the county were at that time the same.* "I have never," says Dr Hawkins, "been in any town in Great Britain or Europe in which degeneracy of form and colour from the national standard has been so obvious as in Manchester." The serfs to the cotton-lords lived in such conditions in fact that health for themselves or health for their progeny was alike impossible.

The present Lord Shaftesbury proved in his speech in favour of the Ten Hours' Bill in 1844, that in spinning yarns, a woman must walk from nineteen to twenty-nine miles a-day—in a pestilential atmosphere be it remembered—stooping all the time, and that besides, she must make four or five thousand turns which greatly increased the exhaustion.† As to the effect of this work upon the women,

* Lord Ashley, March 15, 1844.
† Lord Ashley's Speech, March 15, 1844.

all the most distinguished surgeons of the day, including Sir Benjamin Brodie, Mr Ashton Key, &c., signed a report proclaiming it to be in the highest degree injurious. It was also shown that the tendency of improved machinery was invariably to substitute women and children's labour more and more for the labour of adults. Medical men invariably attribute the prevalence of scrofula already noted to factory employment in great heat, to low diet, bad ventilation, and protracted toil.* Death they consider a less evil than the continuance of such conditions. Yet, in the year 1847, when the Ten Hours' Bill was finally made law the capitalists vigorously opposed the restriction of the work of women which necessarily entailed the reduction of the hours for men.

If there is one name which capitalists are fond of placarding as that of the great champion of true liberalism, if there is a man living who is never weary of proclaiming his great solicitude for the well-being of the working-classes, it is the Right Honourable John Bright. He and his friend Mr Cobden led the bitter opposition to the humane proposals of those truly noble men, Michael Sadler, Robert Owen, J. Fielden, and Lord Shaftesbury. Speaking in 1847 in the House of Commons, after a violent denunciation of the whole principle of the Ten Hours' Bill and those who supported it, Mr Bright and his coadjutors did not hesitate also to impute the vilest motives to those who were working in the interests of the class whom they oppressed. After urging that the Ten Hours' Bill must reduce wages which was untrue, and that working-

* It will be seen later that matters have been little improved up till now. Those who wish to see the medical evidence in brief should read Lord Ashley's speech of March 15th, 1844, already partly quoted.

men were opposed to it, which was absolutely false, Mr Bright went on, "He thought if such a result took place it would be the duty of manufacturers—nay, that it would be absolutely necessary for them—to take such steps as would prevent the ruin from coming upon them which must result from the passing of this measure. The honourable gentleman, the member for Birmingham (Mr Muntz), stated that he (Mr Bright) had signed a petition in favour of the Ten Hours Bill. He confessed that at one time he did get up and signed a petition in favour of such a Bill, but then it was one of the acts of his boyhood; and he regretted extremely that the follies of his boyhood appeared to attach themselves to the mature age of the honourable member for Birmingham." On another occasion he said (March 18, 1844):—"It is because I am convinced this project [the Ten Hours Bill] is now impracticable, and that under our present oppressive legislation it would make all past injustice only more intolerable that I shall vote against the proposition which the noble Lord has submitted to the House." Again, on the 10th February 1847, in the face of the medical and other testimony quoted above, Mr Bright stated as the result of his experience and investigations as a manufacturer with regard to the labour of women:—"The assertion that their labour was extremely hard and long-continued; but how did it happen that women were found in factories at all. The very fact that they were there in such large numbers was conclusive evidence that labour in factories was not hard. (Oh.)" No wonder the House shouted "oh." Thus it appears that the greatest obstacles were put in the way of the most beneficial legislation of this century, by the principal orator of the class which poses as the benefactor of humanity. Happily

the Bill was passed in spite of the virulent opposition of Mr Bright and the cotton lords, and since 1847, overwork in factories, though still serious, has not been absolutely crushing as it would have still remained had these "friends of the working classes" had their way.*

But in the direction of improved housing and other

* It is almost unnecessary, it seems to me, to add anything to the quotations in the text, especially as Mr Bright and Mr Cobden were both vehement adversaries of Trade Unions, when those bodies were really acting nobly in opposition to the interests of the manufacturers. But it has been pointed out to me that Mr Bright has long since been canonised as a saint in the capitalist-Liberal calendar, and that nothing short of another plain citation from his own speeches will even partially arouse his dazed worshippers to the truth, or enable them to see dimly through the halo of falsity wherewith his eloquence has robed him around. Therefore I give the following passage from Mr Bright's remarks on adulteration of bread and other food, when he was President of the Board of Trade. The speech was delivered on March 5th, 1869, in reply to a request that inspectors of adulterated goods and public analysts should be appointed. Mr Bright said:— "My own impression with regard to this adulteration is, that it arises from the very great and, perhaps, inevitable competition in business; and that to a large extent it is promoted by the ignorance of customers. As the ignorance of customers is diminishing, we may hope that before long the adulteration of food will also diminish. . . . . It is quite impossible that you should have the oversight of the country by inspectors, and that you can organise a body of persons to go into shops to buy sugar, pickles, and cayenne, to get them analysed, and then to raise complaints against shopkeepers, and bring them before the magistrates. If men in their private businesses were to be tracked by Government officers every hour in the day, life would not be worth having, and I should recommend them to remove to another country where they would not be subject to such annoyance." In vain several members pointed out that in most foreign countries to adulterate bread and other food was a punishable offence, and that the health of the community suffered from these infamous frauds, Mr Bright still stuck to his text, that adulteration was merely a form of competition. Perhaps he was thinking of a certain "form of competition" in the shape of "sizing," "loading," and the like, which was going on in some Rochdale mills. Who knows?

matters nothing was done. Such was the pressure upon accommodation that the veriest den was sure to find a tenant at some rent. Courts where hundreds of people were dependent upon one pump for water supply, where the accommodations for cleanliness of every kind were absolutely non-existent could be commonly found in all our great cities. The highly paid artisans who profited by the demand for skilled labour were balanced by an array of miserably underpaid toilers who were glad to find shelter anywhere. Doctors to their honour, be it said, have never ceased to protest against the fearful physical deterioration brought about by the relentless slave-driving system of unrestricted competition; factory inspectors have exposed time after time the unbridled greed of the capitalist class, and their utter indifference to the sufferings of the people. Even high wages cannot compensate for such a life as was alone possible in the factory towns from 1780 to 1848.

For during the whole period of the development of the great steam industry, competition among the workers and the revolutionary influence of the improved machinery were helped by an influx of foreign labourers accustomed to a cheaper form of diet, strong and vigorous, owing to fresh air and no overwork, and ready to put up with worse lodging than even the English wage-earners were in the habit of getting. The full effect of the Irish immigration upon the English workers has never yet been adequately handled from the economical side. Whilst the sufferings of the Irish have been frequently dwelt upon without being alleviated the injury their competition has done our own people in consequence of their terrible poverty at home has been almost overlooked. Those very circumstances which

led up to the great famine of 1847, drove more and more Irish in needy circumstances over to this country.

The total increase of the population of Great Britain between 1801 and 1811 was about 1,600,000, and between 1801 and 1841, the population of Great Britain actually increased nearly 8,000,000, the numbers being 18,720,394 in 1841, against 10,942,646 in 1801. The great increase of 80 per cent. in forty years would alone have caused a good deal of misery in a state of society, where all the means of production were at the disposal of the wealthy, and the extraordinary increase in the power of man over nature was used for the benefit of the well-to-do. But the Irish immigration certainly made matters worse than they would otherwise have been.* Englishmen, when their standard of life was reduced, might have combined more fiercely to resist the economical pressure which ground them down, but for the fact that just around them were men and women—more especially in the North of England and Scotland where the factory system had freest play—who were prepared to do all the hard and dirty work at what to English labourers meant actual starvation wages.

The English capitalists had, in the innumerable population of the miserably poor Irish, a reserve industrial army to draw upon, which never failed during the whole period under consideration. Irishmen had nothing to lose, and everything to gain when labour was offered to them on this

* Speaking of impoverishment and over-population Thornton says—"Another cause, however, that sensibly contributed to the same result must not be overlooked. There was already (1811) a by no means inconsiderable influx of Irish labourers who could not of course obtain employment without depressing, or at least keeping down the wages of labour and compelling some of their English competitors to have recourse to the poor-rates."—Thornton, "Over-population," p. 223.

side of St George's Channel, where, at times at least, good wages and sure employment were to be obtained by strong arms. This immigration of Irish began at the end of the eighteenth century, contemporaneously with the development of machinery, and the construction of canals. By the year 1840, it is reckoned that not fewer than a million had crossed the Irish Channel, settling in the various industrial centres at the rate of about fifty thousand a year during the latter portion of the time. In 1840, according to Sir Archibald Alison, there were 120,000 poor Irish in London, 40,000 in Manchester, 34,000 in Liverpool, 24,000 in Bristol, 40,000 in Glasgow, and 29,000 in Edinburgh.

Irishmen have many good qualities, and they have shown, in case after case, that they feel the duty which they owe to their country and their relations far more deeply than Englishmen of the same class. Notwithstanding the trammels of their creed, they have often displayed a political independence, and a power of combination for their own cause, be it what it might, which the English might well envy. But the economical and social effect of this Irish immigration upon the English workers showed no good side at all to our people. These immigrants were, in fact, almost destitute of civilisation: rough, drunken, careless about the future, they brought their manners and customs from the wilds of the west into the densely peopled quarters of our English cities, which already, in all conscience, were uncivilised and brutal enough. Their voyage across from Ireland cost them a few pence on the deck of a steamer. Once over, they settled in the most miserable rookeries. Wanting few clothes, living almost entirely upon potatoes, requiring no furniture in their rooms, these people had discovered the very smallest amount of necessaries which a human being

could exist upon in our climate, and were consequently specially useful to capitalists. All their filthy customs, which were comparatively harmless in Ireland, were pernicious to the last degree in our great cities.

The Irish quarter became proverbial for filth, drunkenness, and general unwholesomeness. Most of the occupants of cellars were Irish, and in these dungeons they bred children at an incredible rate, their very poverty here, as in other cases, being, within certain limits, favourable to generation. All the dust, offal, and other refuse, they threw out into the streets anyhow, preparing the way for pestilence and fevers, which swept off others as well as themselves ; besides, the pig is to the Irishman what his horse is to the Arab, and "the gentleman who pays the rint" had free quarters in the Irishman's cellar in Stockport, Manchester, or Glasgow, just as he had his privileged corner in the ramshackle cabin of Kerry or Donegal. Ragged clothes, a heap of straw, an empty case for a table, a pig, and just enough wages to buy potatoes and whisky, such was the standard of life of these new competitors with our English working class. The utter carelessness of existence, the very fire and life of the people which made them good soldiers, their vivacity and cleverness which gave them an opening in other parts of the world, here did but serve to deepen their own degradation, and to intensify the misery around them.

How could the English labourers, still accustomed to some comfort, and anxious to maintain, some of them, a better lot for their class, how could they compete with such labourers as these in the trades where brute force alone was required? As a factory hand, it is true, the Irishman or Irishwoman was as yet of little use. But in simple unskilled labour he was quite the match for the Englishman, and was

willing to work at a much lower wage, proportional, of course, to his lower standard of life. Down, therefore, came wages in all these unskilled trades to very nearly the level of the Irish necessities, and more miserable became the lot of the whole labouring class.

For the relentless law of wage-competition came into play at once, that in the long run, wages tend towards, or even tend to range below, the amount necessary for subsistence for a man and his family; and the Irish being able and willing to live upon less wages than the English for equal expenditure of labour-force, wages in those branches of industry necessarily fell lower and lower. Thus the action of the dominant class in Ireland itself, by confiscating the land from the people, by raising rents immediately improvements were made, by encouraging the competition for land, brought about a hideous poverty among the people of that island, which led to an inordinate increase of population after the introduction of the potato. Thereupon these miserable Irish peasants, barely able to keep body and soul together, though quantities of food in every shape were exported from Ireland to England for the benefit of the rackrenters and luxurious classes, these poor cottiers, hopeless at home, flocked over to our English cities as their descendants have swarmed across the Atlantic, reducing, by their forced competition, the already low rate of wages obtained by the English labourer. When we find that between Englishmen and Irishmen there is no love lost, it is well, at any rate, to attribute the hostility to the right causes; and to my mind it is clear that race-hatred, religious antipathy, objection to Celtic clannishness, each by itself, or all together, have had no such influence in producing ill-feeling as the knowledge forced upon English workers that

Irishmen by accepting lower wages from the class which owns the means of production and enslaves its brother men, necessarily give the capitalists an advantage, and rivet the chain yet tighter on the neck of the wage-earning class.

The conditions of life noted above were consequently made, to an increasing extent, permanent for all. Between the middle-class, who lived in "respectable" fashion, between the capitalists, who prided themselves on their philanthropy to all human beings save the women, children, and men, out of whom they ground the wealth wherewith to endow churches and chapels, and to subscribe to the missionary societies for the heathen — between these most honourable persons and the wage-slave class there was a great gulf fixed. The capitalists knew and know more of the people of other countries than of the workers who live in poverty at their doors. All the misery, drunkenness, debauchery, prostitution, and degradation around them were, to their minds, the result of natural causes, or due to the nature of the people themselves. That bad surroundings and hopeless conditions of life, that low wages and unwholesome food, crowded lodgings and no pleasure, must necessarily beget a miserable and degraded population, who owe their misery and moral pollution to the very class which fancies itself so superior — these are ideas which the middle-class, the capitalists, the landowners, as a possessing class, never thought of, even in a slight degree, until hard facts were forced upon them by the efforts of a few self-sacrificing men and the organised risings of the operatives.

We have seen that from 1750 to 1795, although the power of production * was daily growing at a rate pre-

* In 1816, a population of 2500 persons working ten hours a day

viously unknown, and out of all proportion to the increase of the population, large as it was, that in this time wages had fallen most seriously in proportion to the price of the necessaries of life; and that a furious competition had commenced among the mass of the wage-earners for miserable wages. Between 1795 and 1810, prices were still higher than before, and though wages rose for the skilled artisans of the cities, they did not rise for the unskilled or for the agricultural labourers in the same proportion.

At first the absorption of the agricultural labourers into the towns and the wide extension of agriculture, owing to the great demand for corn, benefited this last class of workers somewhat. The lessened production in the countries which were the seat of war, the demand for grain to feed the armies in Spain, the high profits made by the farmers as a class—for once more, as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, prices of country produce rose much more rapidly than either rent or wages of labour—all these causes gave a great impetus to agriculture during the time that the war lasted. Farmers in many cases "made money by hatfuls," as more than one of them confessed. The enormous cost of the American and French wars, chiefly met by borrowing, necessarily increased the power of the capitalist and money-lending class, and hid the drain of wealth which the con-

could produce more cotton stuffs than a million persons engaged in the same business fifty years before, say 400 times as much. Almost the same in other textile manufactures and iron. Says Thornton, "Although some important sections of the people became impoverished, the aggregate wealth of the nation was fast and steadily increasing," p. 221. I take special pleasure in quoting this Malthusian writer, who evidently thought there could be no "over-population," save that of the producers of wealth; nay, who contends that the way to produce most wealth is to curtail the numbers of the very people who produce it—the labourers, namely!

duct of the war occasioned. The funded debt in 1756 was £72,289,673; in 1813 it was £600,000,000. In 1815 the debt was £800,000,000. Suddenly all this inordinate expenditure came to an end, the army was disbanded, the market for agricultural produce was restricted. All nations had to return to a more sober, peaceful existence. Strange to say, England, the victor in the struggle, the country which had dictated the conditions of peace, which had obtained the spoils of France, Spain, and Holland, which was now absolutely supreme at sea and mistress of the markets and the colonial empire, we may say of the whole world, wealthy England suffered far more in the transition than France, who had been impoverished, conquered, and despoiled of her possessions.

Yet that this should have been so seems at first sight wholly irreconcilable with the main facts. When the war ended, the extraordinary efforts and taxation ceased too. In 1814, the public expenditure reached the enormous total of £106,832,260; in 1815 it was £92,000,000; in 1816, £65,000,000; in 1817, the amount was reduced to £55,000,000. Here, surely, was a great opportunity for a new bound in our commercial prosperity, as English machinery, manufactures, and agriculture were all in a position to take the fullest advantage of the peaceful competition which had followed the war.* But so far from this being the case, the peace brought with it untold misery and depression. Foreign commerce languished, the exports fell from £51,000,000 in 1815 to £35,000,000 in 1817. Meanwhile the people were in the most miserable case, especially in the agricultural districts, and the popula-

* Leon Faucher, 195; Porter's "Progress of the Nation," 515.

tion of England and Wales increased from 10,000,000 in 1811 to 12,000,000 in 1821.

During the war the landowners and the farmers were gaining in increased rent and profit a greater share of the general production than they could possibly be entitled to under the ordinary conditions of a society such as ours had now become. Men had not taken account of the extraordinary changes which had been going on around them for the past thirty or forty years. The excitement of the war, the glorious victories, had to a great extent shut out any general understanding of the progress of events in England itself. Men for soldiers, and materials for their support, had been in urgent demand for full a quarter of a century. "Barns and farmyards were full, and warehouses were weighed down with all manner of productions, and prices fell much below the cost at which the articles could be produced. Farm servants were dismissed, and no employment could be found for them, the manufacturers being in the same situation as the farmers, and obliged to discharge their hands by hundreds, and in many cases to discharge their hands by thousands. The distress among all workpeople was so great that the upper and middle classes became alarmed, foreseeing that the support of the hundreds of thousands unemployed, if this state of things continued, must fall upon them."* Crime increased in an enormous ratio in all parts of the country, whilst outbreaks were common. The very superabundance of wealth, combined with the increased employment of machinery and the discharge of the soldiers and sailors was the cause of all the mischief. Machines were really continually diminishing he demand for labour, and the fall in prices drove em-

* R. Owen, Autobiography, p. 121.

ployers to carry their economies to the highest pitch. At this very time it was calculated that in the cotton industry alone, machine power had been introduced equal to the labour of 80,000,000 of men, and much of this machinery was not worked by men at all, but by women and children.

Thus it was that at the very time when the peace threw more men into the labour market, when prices fell to an unremunerative level, and consequently neither the farmers nor the manufacturers could produce at a profit—which, in our existing system, is their only reason for producing at all—when machinery was playing an ever-growing part in our production, when in short there were plenty of goods awaiting consumers on one side, and many unemployed anxious to consume on the other, no one saw how to bring the two together. Those who were most responsible for the war actually aggravated the position for the mass of the people. Landowners who had talked so loudly of patriotism shuffled off the income-tax very speedily, and introduced protective duties to help the farmers as they pretended, but really to maintain their rents. The landed aristocracy voted itself a civil list out of the food of the people; the capitalists squeezed fortunes out of the very lives of women and children.

For the people this meant hopeless pauperism, and the agricultural labourers suffered now, perhaps, more than ever. Up to this period (1816 to 1820) there had still been a large number of agricultural labourers who lived at the same table with the farmers and shared their lot in good or bad seasons. But from this date they too were discharged on to the highways, and the agricultural districts became the seat of permanent pauperism, as the manufacturing di[illegible] were of a floating pauperism. From one end of the

dom to the other the people suffered horribly. Upon them fell all the burdens of the war; they had to pay for the glory abroad, and to bear also the curse of the growth of the factory system at home. This went on for years, and is not at an end now. No wonder that "Captain Swing" started incendiary fires throughout the country, or that secret conspiracy flourished in the towns. Six or seven shillings a week were the wages of the agricultural labourers who enabled the farmers to make a profit as times improved, and secured the landlords their enhanced rents out of their ill-paid labour.

On the top of all this misery came the agitation for, and eventually the enactment of, the new Poor Law. "It was at this time when the sufferings of the unemployed were extreme that the political economists conspired against the just, natural, and legal rights of those who could not find employment, and who had no other means of living except from national support, stealing, or prostitution. They did not take into account that the wealth of the nation had increased in a much greater ratio than the poor's-rate. The political economists by reasoning from a false principle, knowing little of human nature, and less of the powers of society when rightly directed, had hardened their hearts against the natural feelings of humanity, and were determined, aided by their disciples (the Whigs), to starve the poor from the land. And their measures did starve millions in Great Britain and Ireland without attaining economy for the nation or diminishing the number of the poor. The plans which they induced the nation to adopt starved the weakest and best of the poor, drove others to theft and murder, and the poor females to prostitution. And these measures were adopted while there was abund-

ance of uncultivated land and an enormous accumulation of wealth squandered in useless wars, which a little common sense could easily have avoided, and in as ignorant foreign speculations in mines, loans, and all manner of wild schemes which promised, however fallaciously, a high interest for capital. The rapid accumulation of wealth, from the rapid increase of mechanical and chemical power, created capitalists who were among the most ignorant and injurious of the population. The wealth created by the industry of the people, now made abject slaves to these new artificial powers, accumulated in the hands of what are called the monied class, who created none of it, and who misused all they had acquired."

Leaving the history of the new Poor Law aside for the moment it is apparent how this plan of cutting off the relief of the poor at the moment when they stood most in need of help threw the producers still more hopelessly into the hands of the capitalist class. In 1831 the population of England and Wales was just 14,000,000, or an increase of 2,000,000 since 1821. The earnings of the employed were at this time insufficient to give them the commonest comforts of life. Although the harvests of 1835 and 1836 were peculiarly abundant and produced a temporary relief, thus justifying the new Poor Law of 1834 in the eyes of its promoters, this was followed by an amount of distress among the wage-earning population in 1840, 1841, and 1842, which was almost as bad as in the years immediately succeeding the war. The distress affected manufacturing and agricultural population alike, and the whole of the working classes were in a miserable condition. Wages fell alike actually and relatively, the numbers of the unemployed increased, and from 1837 onwards matters showed no improvement.

Yet as it has been shown that in all manufactures a comparatively small number of people could, with new appliances, produce far more than a great number a generation or two before, so in agriculture the return was much greater, though a smaller proportion of the population worked at this branch of industry. The decrease in the proportion of the whole population engaged in agriculture in Great Britain between 1811 and 1841 was most marked. Whereas the proportion employed in agriculture in 1801 was 35 per cent., in 1841 it was but 25 per cent. Between 1801 and 1831, though the addition to the number of families altogether was at the rate of 34 per cent., the addition to the agricultural class was but 7¼ per cent. In some counties, such as Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Bedford, the change in the proportions was quite surprising. Yet in the course of forty years the production of wheat alone had increased in amount equal to the consumption of 5,500,000 persons, at the rate of 8 bushels a year per head.

Thus then, a comparatively trifling addition to the number of producers had enormously increased the amount of available food in the shape of wheat, and similar progress had been made in every department of agriculture. The country was indeed, notwithstanding the increase of population, to a very small extent dependent upon foreign sources for grain, owing to the great improvements in manuring and all agricultural processes since the beginning of the century. But the agricultural labourers benefited by these improved systems and the development of agriculture, as little as the factory operatives did by the new inventions and the steam power. On the contrary,

[1] Porter's "Progress of the Nation."

the depression among them was terrible, in every county, and the introduction of the "gang-system" brought with it into the country similar break-up of family life, gross immorality, excessive overwork for women and children, and general deterioration. The landlords and farmers were almost as bad as the factory-owners and cotton-capitalists.

The Report on women and children employed in Agriculture of the year 1843, discloses a truly abominable state of things in the country districts, under the very eyes and noses of our "patriotic" nobles and squires. Children of five and six years old were employed at the most exhausting labour, after walking several miles to their work. The gang-master, who was (and is) literally a slave-driver in the old sense, simply gets his gang together and undertakes a contract. All he has to do is to finish the work as quickly as possible, and to pay his gang as little as possible. He is not in the least responsible for the morals, conduct, or lodgment of his gang. The result to the girls, as set forth in this report, is disgusting.* At least seventy per cent. of the young girls were habitually unchaste. They slept together in hovels, men and women, under circumstances where cleanliness and decency were alike impossible. This gang-system was not of course universal, but it had spread widely at the date of this report, whilst the state of the agricultural labourers was worse than before. Thus, in agriculture as in manufacture, an immense increase of production with fewer hands was accompanied by an increase of misery and degradation.

But it was the same in every direction. Let any portion of English production and trade between 1801 and 1848

* Compare Report of 1867 given later on Child Employment.

be examined, and it will be found that the increase in the total national wealth was enormous beyond all precedent. Even in years of apparent depression and crisis, the expansion really went on steadily for the benefit of the well-to-do classes. Exports and imports are not a test of prosperity; but public buildings, inhabited houses above a certain rental, the vast development of large factories, the value of real and personal property, the improved communications—in every branch the change was marvellous. The amounts insured against fire rose from £230,000,000 for the whole United Kingdom in 1801 to over £800,000,000 in 1848. The increased rental of real property in England and Wales alone in the thirty years, 1815 to 1845, actually amounted to £40,000,000 a year. The total cost of domestic servants—a non-producing class, administering only to the luxuries of others—was little less than £50,000,000 a year. The tonnage of vessels trading to British ports had swollen six-fold since the beginning of the century.

That very improvement in means of communication also which had been one of the most marked features of the period, was carried out, not in the interest or under the organised direction of the nation at large, but in a strange hap-hazard competitive fashion, which greatly injured their usefulness and inflamed the cost. Even a thorough middle-class writer, so early as 1845, could not but see the mischiefs of this anarchical policy. Railways were essential to the industrial progress of the country. The development of the home trade, the vast importations of raw material, the unprecedented out-put of our coal and iron mines, following upon the revolution in the methods of manufacture already described, led up to this improvement by a necessary

progression. George Stephenson was like Hargreaves or Crompton, but the happy individual who gave the last practical push to ideas which would have been turned to account almost at the same time if he had never existed.

But by this time the *laissez-faire* system had gained full control in matters of public business. The State, which should only mean the power of the people organised and used for the good and welfare of the whole community, had come to be regarded as hostile to progress and its influence as sure to be exerted to the general detriment. As a result, sums were spent on the construction of the railway system of England altogether out of proportion to the real necessary cost, legal expenses were piled up to a height which was nothing short of monstrous, landowners were granted vast sums for rights of way, which they had no title whatever to hold against the English people, competing lines were sanctioned which involved the worst kind of waste of labour. More permanently injurious to the country than all, a monopoly was gradually created, arising even out of the nature of this competition, which put the traffic of the country as well as its production under the control of another branch of the great system of capitalism. It was indeed a most short-sighted arrangement this, which the landlord's Parliament began prior to 1832, and the middle-class Parliament has sanctioned ever since. In any case, by the year 1848 the main railway system, as we now know it, was laid down and constructed, though not fully used, and from that time to this the great railway interest in the House of Commons has been the representation of a monopoly which takes its share out of the produce of the country, as a permanent return payable by the labour of the living to the labour of the dead.

There is, however, no need to insist further upon the contrast between the wealth piled up for the luxurious classes between 1760 and 1848, and the miserable conditions created at the same time for the poor. Every record of the period tells the same tale. There were times of less oppression, years when the distress of the people was less deplorable than at others, but in the long run the mass of the workers suffered beyond measure, and the rich went heedlessly on their way. The American War, the great French War, the Reform Bill, the new Poor Law, the Chartist agitation, the Repeal of the Corn Laws, all passed by without affecting in any great degree the position of those who worked for a livelihood. Such reforms and ameliorations as were brought about met with the most vigorous opposition from the capitalist class as a body. Two generations grew up in the manufacturing towns under conditions so fatal to health, strength, morality and education that the mischievous effects of the unregulated oppression are easily traceable, and have been by no means remedied yet.

As the sixteenth century was the period of horror for the vagrant and the labourer, so the fifty or sixty years from the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth was the period of utter misery for the men, women, and children of our town proletariat, as well as for the agricultural labourers. Religion, law, justice, humanity were trodden under foot by the landlord and capitalist class, and England became the leader of the great industrial development of our time at the expense of the degradation and embrutement of our working population.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER V.

Economists have a strange way of proceeding. For them there are but two sorts of institutions, those of art and those of nature. Feudal institutions are artificial institutions, bourgeois institutions are natural institutions. They resemble in this respect the theologians who also establish two sorts of religion. Every religion but theirs is an invention of man, whilst their own particular religion is an emanation from God. In saying that the existing relations—the relations of bourgeois production—are natural the economists mean to say that these are the relations in which wealth is created and the productive forces are developed in conformity with the laws of nature. Hence these relations are themselves natural laws, independent of the influence of time. They are eternal laws which must always govern society. Thus there has been history, but there is no longer any. There has been history since there have been feudal institutions, and in these feudal institutions are found relations of production quite different from those of bourgeois society, which economists wish to pass off as natural, and consequently eternal.

Feudalism had its proletariat too—serfdom—which contained all the germs of the bourgeoisie. Feudal production also had its two antagonistic elements, which are equally labelled the noble side and the bad side of feudalism, without regard to the fact that it is always the bad side which ends by prevailing over the noble side. It is the bad side that produces the movement which makes history by forcing on the class struggle. If at the epoch of the domination of feudalism economists full of enthusiasm for the virtues of chivalry, enamoured of the charming harmony between rights and duties, proud of the patriarchal life of the towns, anxious to maintain the prosperous domestic industry in the country, full of admiration for the development of organised industry by corporations, in short, if the economists in their regard for all that constitutes the noble side of feudalism had proposed to themselves to efface the whole of the shady side of this picture—serfdom, privilege, anarchy—what would have come of it? They would have destroyed all the elements which involved struggle, and would have nipped in the bud the development of the bourgeoisie. They would have proposed to themselves the absurd problem how to eliminate history.

When the bourgeoisie had won the day there was no longer any question of the good or bad side of feudalism. The productive forces which had been developed by it under feudalism were acquired. All



the ancient economical forms, the civil relations which corresponded to them, the political state which was the official expression of the ancient civil society were broken up.

Thus to judge properly of feudal production it must be considered as a method of production founded on antagonism. It must be shown how wealth was produced within this antagonism, how the productive forces were developed at the same time as the antagonism of classes, how one of the classes, the bad side, the nuisance of society, was always increasing until the material conditions of its emancipation had arrived at maturity. Is it not enough to say that the method of production, the relations in which the productive forces are developed are anything rather than eternal laws, that they correspond to a definite development of men and of their productive forces, and that a change in the productive forces of men necessarily brings with it a change in the relations of production? As it is specially important not to be deprived of the fruits of civilisation, of the productive forces already gained, the traditional forms in which they have been produced must be broken. From that moment the revolutionary class becomes conservative.

The bourgeoisie begins with a proletariat which is itself the remains of the proletariat of feudal times. In the course of its historical development the bourgeoisie necessarily develops its own antagonistic character, which at the beginning was more or less disguised, which existed only in a latent shape. As the bourgeoisie is developed, there is developed in its bosom a new proletariat, a modern proletariat: a struggle develops between the proletarian class and the bourgeois class, a struggle which before being felt on the two sides, perceived, appreciated, comprehended, avowed, and proclaimed aloud only manifests itself in the first instance by partial and momentary conflicts, by subversive events. On the other hand, if all the members of the modern bourgeoisie have the same interests so far as they form a class over against another class, they have opposite antagonistic interests so far as they find themselves face to face with one another. This opposition of interests flows from the economical conditions of their bourgeois life. From day to day it becomes therefore clearer that the relations of production in which the bourgeoisie moves have not a single character, a simple character, but a double character; that in the same relations in which wealth is produced misery is produced also; that in the same relations in which there is a development of productive forces there is a force which produces repression; that these relations only produce bourgeois wealth, that is to say wealth for the bourgeois class, by annihilating every day the wealth of the individual members of this class and by producing an ever-increasing proletariat.

The more the ruling class character is revealed, the more the econo-

mists, the scientific representatives of bourgeois production, fall out with their own theory and different schools are formed.

We have the *fatalist* economists, who in their theory are as indifferent to what they call the drawbacks of bourgeois production, as the bourgeois themselves are in practice indifferent to the sufferings of the proletariat who help them to gain wealth. In this fatalist school there are classics and romancists. The classics, like Adam Smith and Ricardo, represent a bourgeoisie which, still struggling with the remnants of the feudal society, only works to clear the economical relations from feudal blots, to increase the productive forces, and to give a new outlet to industry and commerce. The proletariat taking part in this struggle, absorbed in this feverish work, has only passing, accidental sufferings, and so regards them itself. Economists like Adam Smith and Ricardo, who are the historians of this epoch, have no other mission than to show how wealth is acquired in the relations of bourgeois production, to formulate these relations into categories, into laws, to demonstrate how these laws, these categories, are superior to the laws and categories of feudal society for the production of wealth. Misery in their eyes is only the suffering which accompanies all birth in nature as in industry.

The romancists belong to our epoch, where the bourgeoisie is in direct opposition to the proletariat; where misery is produced in as great abundance as wealth. The economists then figure as fatalists, who from their high position cast a proud glance of contempt on the men machines who make wealth. They copy all the developments given by their predecessors, and the indifference which to the others was simplicity becomes for them mere coquetry.

Then comes the *humanitarian* school which takes to heart the bad side of the actual relations of production. This school seeks to clear its conscience by palliating, however little, the real contrasts; it sincerely regrets the distress of the proletariat, the unbridled competition of the bourgeois with one another; it advises the workmen to be sober, to work hard and to have few children: it recommends the bourgeois to devote a regulated vigour to production. The entire theory of this school is founded on interminable distinctions between theory and practice, between principles and results, between idea and application, between substance and form, between essence and reality, between right and fact, between the good and the bad side.

The *philanthropic* school is the humanitarian school perfected. It denies the necessity of the antagonism; *it wants to make all men bourgeois;* it wishes to realise theory in so far as it is distinguishable from practice and contains no antagonism. Needless to say, that in theory, it is easy to make abstraction of contradictions which one meets

every moment in reality. This theory becomes then idealised reality. The philanthropists wish therefore to keep the categories which express bourgeois relations without having the antagonism which constitutes and is inseparable from them. They fancy that they seriously fight against bourgeois practices, and they are more bourgeois than the others.

Just as the *economists* are the scientific representatives of the bourgeois class, so are the *socialists* and *communists* the theorists of the proletariat class. So long as the proletariat is not sufficiently developed to constitute itself a class, and consequently even the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie has not a political character, and the productive forces have not sufficiently developed in the womb of the bourgeoisie itself, to allow the material conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat and for the formation of a new society to be developed, these theorists are only utopians who, to provide for the needs of the oppressed classes, improvise systems and seek for a regenerating science. But as history proceeds, and with it the conflict of the proletariat is shown more plainly, they need no more look for science in their mind, they have only to take account of what is passing under their eyes, and make themselves the expression of it. So long as they search for science and only erect systems, so long as they are at the opening of the struggle, they see in misery only misery without seeing in it the revolutionary, subversive side, which will overturn the ancient society. From this moment science, produced by the historical movement and associating itself with it in full knowledge of its basis, has ceased to be doctrinaire and has become revolutionary.—Karl Marx, "Misère de la Philosophie," pp. 113-119. 1847.

CHAPTER VI.

MOVEMENTS OF THE PEOPLE.

The history of the external affairs of England from the accession of George III. in 1760 until the revolt of the American Colonies in 1775, was little more than the continuance of the long career of victory which had gained her the first place as a commercial and colonial power. Clive's great victory at Plassey was followed by a succession of almost equally noteworthy achievements, which put India at the mercy of this country, whilst in the West Wolfe's triumph over Montcalm practically decided that the English, not the French, should be masters of North America; though the magnificent colony of Louisiana still remained to recall to the minds of Frenchmen Law's splendid but visionary scheme of colonial Empire. That the Dutch and afterwards Hanoverian connection, led us into wasting resources on the continent of Europe, which could have been far more profitably expended at home, cannot be doubted; but the Seven Years' War was an engagement which not even Lord Chatham's genius could clear us from, and the growth of Prussian power was regarded as a counterpoise to that of our "natural enemy."

With the revolt of the American Colonies a new era began, which threatened England with a complete overthrow. It is remarkable that separation should have been forced upon the colonists at a time when they were proudest

of their connection with the mother country, and so soon after the conquest of Canada had relieved them from fear of French aggression. "The English plantations being ours should be us; and the more, considering the many advantages they bring us, whilst the dividing of countries in interest may be a preface to their future troubles, Englishmen under the English Government are, and should be accounted, in the interest of England in any part of the world." So wrote John Bellers at the end of the seventeenth century. And the famous Benjamin Franklin almost echoed his words nearly a century later, when he looked forward to the day that a great English-speaking empire should extend under the British flag from the Arctic region to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific slope. But the hopes and visions of the Quaker economist and the American philosopher, were alike to be blighted by the incredible folly of a German king and the silly perverseness of a bigoted aristocracy.* Foreign mercenaries and murderous Indian savages were vainly employed to put down the justifiable insurrection of free Englishmen, who wished nothing better than to remain in connection with their old home, so long as they were not taxed without representation, or prevented from making the best use of their adopted country. With the miserable record of that great struggle, which was opposed by the noblest names in Great Britain, we have nothing to do, save in so far as its result influenced the course of opinion at home.

Already, prior to 1775, the writings of Wilkes, Tooke,

* I am quite content to bear the reproach of Chauvinism in regard to what I say about the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples. It is necessary to *begin* any combination, and the combination of modern prolectarians will, I am convinced, begin with the Celto-Teutonic peoples. Their constructive instincts will help in this direction.

Junius, Paine, and others, had produced a great effect upon the English public. The king was very roughly handled in such writings; the dominant aristocracy was painted in its true colours; and the current religion was ridiculed. At this time, also, the works of the French Encyclopedists, as well as of Voltaire and Rousseau, became known on this side of the channel, and their "subversive" doctrines made way among the people. But the success of the American revolt and the publication of the noble Declaration of Independence, had, at the moment, a still greater apparent effect on men's minds. An organised agitation was set on foot in order to obtain those elementary political rights which the Americans had so boldly declared to be the heritage of all free-born men; and the period of failure and depression in our foreign policy which followed the loss of the American colonies, helped on the general discontent, then rapidly increasing by reason of the economical pressure recorded in the last chapter.

London at this period, and for many years after, was by no means the orderly, law-abiding city which we of the present generation have come to consider it. The mob had a shrewd idea that the interests of the few did not exactly fall in with the interests of the many, and that the law, which might very well suit the aristocracy then—as it has been fashioned to suit the middle-class now—only represented the determination of those who lived upon labour to maintain their domination over the classes who lived by labour. This turbulence was apparent in the great riot of the Spitalfields weavers, in 1765, when the working classes of that part of London banded themselves together as they had done thirty years before against cheap Irish labour, which was brought into competition with them, as well as

to put down certain other arrangements, to which they objected. The great no-Popery Riot of Lord George Gordon in 1780, however, exhibited the power of the London mob in a still more serious shape. Beginning with a religious manifestation, it soon took a different turn; for it was scarcely mere religious bigots who set to work to throw open the gaol doors, to burn down the houses of the aristocracy, and who maintained themselves as practical masters of the metropolis for six whole days. The fact unquestionably is, that at this period, there was the gravest dissatisfaction with the entire system of government throughout the country, and the agitation might well have been preparatory to a thorough political, if not a thorough social change.

Even the earlier stages of the French Revolution were watched with satisfaction by the people and by the popular leaders. Reform had come to be considered absolutely essential. Englishmen had apparently had enough of seeing their affairs controlled entirely by the landlord class, who not only held the House of Lords in their hands but practically owned the House of Commons, carefully using able men, such as Burke, the Pitts, Canning, Sheridan, to serve their turn. Tory and Whig, those two aristocratic factions whose sole agreement was that they alone should enjoy the plunder of the people, and manage the whole machine of government for their own behoof, held between them absolute sway. It was, as Paine said, a game of "ride and tie," which entirely disregarded the true interests of the nation that bore the whole burden. Statesmen who busied themselves almost solely with foreign affairs or the invention of new taxes to pay for enlarged armaments neither understood nor cared for the great development of industrial power taking place before their eyes.

True, the neglect at first was not quite so cruel, nor were the penalties on poverty quite so bitter then as now. The old landed gentry had some little consideration for the people around them, and some sense, however slight, of their direct responsibility for the poor. Yet had it not been for the great foreign war which followed upon the French Revolution, and lasted for a quarter of a century, it seemed at least probable that reforms which we have not even now attained would have been secured by the people at the end of the last century. The younger Pitt himself was at one time strongly in favour of changes which would have greatly modified the constitution in the democratic direction, and though the aristocracy feared greatly for their predominance, some, at least, were prepared to make a virtue of necessity, and to yield to the rising tide of public opinion. Manhood suffrage, and annual parliaments, are still looked upon by the mass of the middle, and by too many even of the working class, as little short of revolutionary proposals in politics. Nevertheless, the Duke of Richmond brought a Bill into the House of Lords embodying these changes a hundred years ago, and notwithstanding the strong repressive measures which were thought reasonable after the so-called reign of terror on the other side of the Channel, the cobbler, Hardy, who formed an association to call together a National Convention in opposition to Parliament, was acquitted by a middle class jury.

Of the men who were at this time, and for many years after, most active in agitating for political reforms, Major Cartwright, the brother of Dr Cartwright the inventor, was chief, and it is surprising to read the names and standing of the men who were prepared to work with this upright -hearted enthusiast in favour of a thorough reorganisa-

of the representation.* Cartwright himself, a well-to-do squire, was almost as noble and unselfish a character as Robert Owen, but whereas the latter saw that political reforms were useless unless the mass of the people were imbued with true ideas of social improvement, Cartwright held that freedom, being the right of every man, the suffrage could not be in justice withheld, and would of itself work social reforms. Throughout his career, which has been too much overlooked by modern historians, this reformer was greatly opposed to the use of brute force by the people, nor had he any mercy upon the Lincolnshire farm-labourers, who, like the Spitalfield weavers, rose in 1791 against the competition of Irish cheap labour. His economical views were in fact far behind his political ideas.

In spite of his exertions and those of his friends, notwithstanding the vigorous writing and speaking that went on in the face of great danger from spies and informers, it is clear to us now that neither the final declaration of Independence by our American Colonies nor the great revolutionary outbreak of 1789 produced the practical permanent influence which might have been looked for when the stir they made at the moment is considered. In 1789 the working classes of England, far more turbulent, and as some might say independent than they are now, though they could make riots and shout aloud for the champions of freedom were in no case to organise a social and political revolution. They had every chance and they failed. There was not as yet the same direct personal oppression as in France to compel insurrection, nor did London hold the same position with

* A statue to Cartwright stands in Burton Crescent, London—a thorough middle-class locality. The inscription records that he stood up for the political reforms with which his name is identified.

reference to England that Paris held in regard to France. Still more important was the fact that the English middle class had secured a great portion of their objects long before.* The nominal control of the House of Commons was in their hands, their economical position was assured, freedom of person and sanctity of property were the law of the land. The land itself had been seized too long to be the cause of further serious agitation; corvée and seigneurial rights were unknown. Consequently, at the first serious bloodshed in France, the middle-class here was scared, and the workers had not the power without their assistance to carry on an agitation which could produce any favourable result for them. There was an undoubted reaction which the aristocracy took every advantage of. Burke prostituted his great abilities to the defence of despotism and turned his back upon the opinions of his youth to write rhapsodies in praise of feudal "chivalry." Men like Priestley and Cartwright, who refused to denounce the uprising of a people against their oppressors, because of the outrages which followed, have found less favour with our middle class essayists and biographers than the venal whig who could forget all the wrongs of the French people in his anxiety to earn fees and pensions by whitewashing Marie Antoinette. The former suffered for his opinions by having his house burnt over his head at Birmingham, and the latter was arrested as a revolutionary "suspect" by the English police.

Long before the war with France ended, however, the

* "What made the revolution of 1789 possible in France was the fact that a common sentiment animated the lower classes and the middle class." So writes M. Leon Faucher, but he omits to add that 1789 was but a bourgeois revolution in the long run. Babœuf's conspiracy was, of course, a genuine labour movement, the records of which are not so well known by the workers as they ought to be.

pressure of capital and the wealth of the middle class had become so great that any hope of combination between them and the workers for a thorough social movement had passed away for the time. Though the agitation went on, therefore, during the whole period, and often seemed to attain fresh vigour from some accidental circumstance such as Sir Francis Burdett's trial, the prospect of success was in reality becoming more remote. It is depressing to all who imagine that the history of human improvement can be other than that of slow, and at times almost imperceptible progress, until the moment has come for a new departure, to study the works of the journalists, economists, and thinkers who championed the cause of the people at the end of the last century and the beginning of this. When Cobbett's vehement weekly attacks were circulating at the rate of tens of thousands of copies, when Spence was able to obtain a considerable following for his scheme of land nationalisation, and when a little later Owen could get assistance and encouragement in his socialist projects from leading members of the aristocracy and princes of the blood, few would have believed that the advance had only begun, or that the very completeness of the victory of the class to which these men belonged would throw still farther back the political and social enfranchisement of the mass of the people. Force or fear of force is unfortunately the only reasoning which can appeal to a dominant estate or will ever induce them to surrender any portion of their property or privileges. And the force was becoming more and more at the disposal of the capitalist class, at the same time that the energies of the workers were being to a large extent turned from political agitation to the attempted amelioration of their social condition against this very bourgeoisie.

It may, indeed, be doubted whether mere extension of the suffrage or reform of the constitution ever really changed the position of the workers of a country relatively to other classes until change in the methods of production and consequent spread of new ideas had so modified the conditions of existence that a revolution or an evolution would have been brought about in any case. Political forms are but the outcome of social relations below. It is true, of course, that given favourable opportunities, the enthusiasm of an individual and still more the organised enthusiasm of a group of individuals, may increase the rate of progress by preparing men's minds to take the earliest opportunity of giving shape to ideas which have long been floating hither and thither on the surface of the popular intelligence. But this is only to say in turn that stirring times necessarily produce active men, that the successful are remembered whilst those who have nobly led the way to the border of the promised land are forgotten. In politics as in industry, the long weary work of generations of thinkers who see the truth, but fail to influence in practice the current of their own day, the never-ceasing toil of self-sacrificing enthusiasts who strive in vain to rouse their countrymen to a sense of their own degradation only to be swept aside by the first eddy of passion or prejudice, such men show the path which at last leads to the emancipation of the people.

So it certainly was in England in the years between the French Revolution and the Reform Bill of 1832, or indeed until this very day. The antagonism of classes, the struggle first between the feudal aristocracy and the mercantile or bourgeois class, and then between the bourgeois class and the labourers has not developed in all countries, even in Europe, at the same time or with the same rapidity. As

in the peasant's risings in England of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries in the hopeless upheavals of the Jacquerie in France, and the later insurrections of the populace in the cities of the Netherlands we can discern the first revolts of the labourers, of the producers, whether in agriculture or manufacture, against those who profit by their toil; so the long struggle between the mercantile class and their efforts at enfranchisement began ages before their position was recognised as a class with rights to assert and privileges to protect. Upon such antagonism all progress hitherto has depended. But in England the vast expansion of machine industry gave a different turn to the whole struggle from that which might perhaps have been looked for. The workers of the cities found straight in front of them something to attack which was more tangible and at the same time more clearly the cause of their depressed condition than the need of any political reform or even of any economical reform which related to the land.

In France and partly in Germany, the effect of the French revolution and the ideas which its leaders spread far and wide through Europe was to bring about or rather to hasten on the settlement of the people upon the land in the form of peasant proprietors. England had passed through this economical phase as early as the fifteenth century. Our free sturdy yeomen of old time answer closely enough to the French peasant proprietors and the small German farmers of the present century. Without insisting too much upon such an analogy or upon the undoubted fact that the tendency in England has for the past three centuries been towards farming upon a larger and larger scale with ever-increasing capital, it is nevertheless app[illegible]he social antagonism between men who

were being driven to starvation by machinery on the one hand and the owners of that machinery on the other was certain to be very different alike in aim and in means from that which could be seen where the main object was to hold the soil on which the labourers already lived, without excessive dues or seigneurial oppression.

There are no accidents in history. It was no chance that occasioned the failure of the agitation for parliamentary reform between the date of the accession of George III. and the end of the French war; though the facts that the rise in wages by no means kept pace with the rise in the price of grain, and that the country was engaged in a most doubtful struggle, gave the agitators an exceptional opportunity; it was no chance that led to the miserable compromise of 1832 which placed England completely in the hands of the very class against which the workers should have most striven; it was again no chance that brought about the downfall of the great Chartist movement, and has given over the whole English proletariat to apathy and indifference from 1848 to the present time. Owen, almost alone of the middle-class men of the earlier time, saw clearly what was going on, and appreciated the relentless hostility which must in the nature of the case arise sooner or later between the class which owns the means of production and the machinery and the class whose members must compete against one another for subsistence-wages. But he hoped that the struggle might be peacefully bridged over, certainly he never anticipated that the very ideas of the capitalists themselves would be accepted as indisputable truths by the workmen from political economists who systematised the views of the class opposed to them. Yet so it has

The first effect of the new methods, however, was to bring about a series of attacks by the workmen upon the machinery itself. They very soon discovered that when a machine is introduced into any trade, which a few boys and girls can manage just as well as trained men, the immediate result is to send "hands," to the number of hundreds and often thousands, out on to the streets to bid against one another for unskilled employment. What was to be done? Was it likely that workmen almost destitute of education as they then were, should understand that their enemy was not the machine, but the manner in which it was employed? They only saw as the poor German weavers had seen (if we are to believe the record of an Italian traveller) three centuries before that the machine injured them, and the first step was to destroy it. The long fight of the labourers against machinery, first by actual violence, and then by combination against the class which owns it, has lasted until our own time, and is by no means at an end yet. Of the earlier attacks upon machinery in this country it is unnecessary to speak at length, but the opposition on the part of the populace to its introduction led to some serious outbreaks. In 1758, for instance, Everet's first machine for dressing wool by machinery moved by water power, was reduced to ashes. But the principal riots were occasioned by organised bodies who under the name of Luddites destroyed machinery wholesale in Nottingham and other large towns, alleging, what was perfectly true, that these machines were one great cause of their miserable condition. The risings reached such a pitch in the years 1810 and 1811 that the Government became alarmed and resorted to all sorts of infamous devices to foment premature in[illegible]ns, in order to be able to crush

these the more safely. Spies were sent through the country with direct orders to lay traps for all radicals, and too often succeeded in drawing heedless men into treasonable practices for which they were hanged.*

From the conclusion of the war onwards, matters grew worse and worse owing to the fearful condition of the people. When the corn laws were brought in in the year 1815, the populace of London rose in open revolt against the measure, and meetings were held throughout the kingdom in favour of complete revolution.† The movement had in fact become both social and political, and the use of such agents as the spy Oliver, the famous Green Bag Inquiry of Lord Sidmouth, and other nefarious means at length gave the Government the desired opportunity of suspending the Habeas Corpus Act in 1817. But an impetus was given to agitation by this reactionary policy of the Government itself. Many of the middle-class could scarcely fail to see that these systematic attacks upon the whole basis of freedom and such shameful behaviour as that of the cavalry and yeomanry when they rode upon the unarmed meeting at Petersfield, Manchester, since called the massacre of Peterloo (in 1819) would soon lead to an infringement of their own liberties. Consequently they too began to side for the time with the populace. From 1815 to 1832, and indeed until 1842, so long that is as the middle-class and the working class made common cause even partially, Radicalism in its genuine sense of opposition to all class

* It is the fashion to say that English Governments never employ spies or agents provocateurs. When there is the slightest advantage to be gained by it either in Ireland or England, no Government is more ready to resort to the most nefarious devices than our own.

† Before this law wheat could be imported, when the price of home-grown grain rose to 68s. a quarter; after the limit was raised to 80s.!

domination and a thorough organisation of the collective voting power of the people, made headway.

Never was the promulgation of revolutionary opinions more actively carried on in England than during this period. Now too all the work which had before been done by Cobbett, Bentham, Cartwright, Burdett, began to be felt. The education of the people went on apace. Carlile, Carpenter, Thompson, Hunt, Lovett, Bronterre O'Brien, now came to the front in the systematic agitation which went on ; and so monstrous was the exisiting system of representation that every outbreak could be pointed to by men even of good position as the natural result of political injustice. Yet it is too true that there seemed little spontaneity in these movements when they came, that there was not that general acceptance of revolutionary ideas among the people as a whole, which must precede a full assertion of the rights of the labouring class. Such risings as occurred can be largely traced to the action of circumstances external to the people themselves. Thus the troubles which commenced in 1815, and which led to the arrest or flight of so many earnest reformers in 1817, were due to a great extent to general depression and want among the people, aggravated partly by the introduction of the corn laws. The continuous agitation which followed until 1819, was the result of the inconceivable folly of the Government in forcing on unnecessary measures of repression, and eventually the impulse which drove the aristocracy into granting the Reform Bill of 1832, came at least in part from the July Revolution in Paris.

But whether the growing disturbance was one of ideas forcing their way up from within, or due to extraneous causes, which influenced the people from without, the fact

remains, that throughout these years the populace were slowly learning to assert their rights to public meetings and due representation,* and that publications found a ready sale among the people, which contained views in reference to relations of the labourers to the landlords and capitalists far in advance of anything which appears in the most popular journals of to-day. The French Revolution, that middle-class bug-bear which every boy has been steadily educated to look upon as a horror of horrors, even until now, was held up as an example of what a people could achieve under leaders who were ready to carry out their principles in active political life. The middle-class itself was unceasingly denounced in some quarters as more really hostile to the people than the landlords themselves. And yet all this preparation only brought about the compromise of 1832; which though it did away with rotten boroughs, and slightly crippled the power of the aristocrats, handed over the mass of the people to a still meaner domination than before. All the work of the advanced school had apparently been thrown away; manhood suffrage, payment of members, equal electoral districts, the ballot, were no more within hail than nationalisation of the land, or Owen's scheme of organisation of labour.

Lord John Russell once said that it took forty years in England to carry a reform which was generally admitted to be necessary: this is a revolutionary rate of progress compared with our usual pace. A hundred years we are told has

* No one who reads the history of the time can doubt that the men like Frost, Vincent, Stephens, and, above all, Bronterre O'Brien, who were persecuted and oppressed by our Tories and Whigs, secured us a free press and right of public meeting. It was "treason" in those days to strive for such manifest rights of free men. It would be "treason" now to attempt to interfere with the "sacred rights" of property.

not sufficed to bring even manhood suffrage within the region of "practical politics." But after the great Reform Bill of 1832, which was to have wrought such marvels for the people, affairs grew worse, depression was, if possible, more severely felt, the New Poor Law shut down a safety valve, and in 1834-35 the organised Chartist movement began which, though it reached its culminating point, as some consider, in 1842—the year of most excitement and open riot—was certainly alive and ready to take advantage of any good opportunity six years later. The Chartist political programme was little more than a reproduction of the old demands of the earlier years of the century, or of those formulated still sooner by Cartwright and the Duke of Richmond. But most of the leaders had social objects in view as well, which the political reforms would afford only the machinery peaceably to carry out. They were, in any case, a noble body of men, leaders and followers alike. Unlike continental revolutionists, they founded their claims upon the history of their country, and clamoured for the restoration of rights which their fathers had been deprived of. Their agitation was conducted in such a manner as to recall the old struggles of the people in the centuries gone by.

Nevertheless, it is the fact that, for want of organisation, for want of sufficient confidence in one another, every one of their armed risings was put down by a handful of soldiers or police, with great loss to the insurgents, and next to none to the guardians of order; and their entire political work ended in less of practical gain at the time than was the result the outbreak of a single Parisian faubourg. It was no want of courage that caused them to fail, nor were numbers lacking to support them; but the deficiency of

any complete social plan, the absence of sound social ideas of reconstruction—in short, the now manifest truth that the development of the resisting power of the working-class had not kept pace with the growth of the power of the middle and upper class, together with certain external causes, brought the entire movement to a standstill.

But the Chartists were the first real working-class party that had come to the front in this country for many generations. It is not out of place, therefore, to record here the "five points" which were long regarded as the gospel of democracy —(1) Manhood suffrage; (2) Vote by ballot; (3) Annual Parliaments; (4) Removal of all property qualifications, and payment of members; (5) Equal electoral districts. These five points were accepted as the basis of a petition to the House of Commons, at Birmingham, on August 6, 1838, and actually received, in a few months, 1,280,000 signatures, the proposals having been confirmed at more than 500 large public meetings. The assembly of delegates, under the name of the National Convention, in London, in April 1839, was an imposing democratic parliament, which might, perhaps, have led to some real step in advance, had its proceedings been conducted with coolness, determination, and sagacity. Unfortunately, the Chartist leaders over-estimated their own strength, and passed resolutions at their meetings which only provoked, without frightening, the dominant classes. Motions to the effect that the House of Commons did not represent the people, and that every man should possess a musket to defend himself, ill a
support given to the reactionary party in Par[li]
hope that organised democracy might
tumult.*

* You cannot, said one of the leaders,

The Chartists, at the suggestion of Feargus O'Connor, left London, where they found, owing to these proceedings, less support than they had looked for from the people, and went off into the provinces to organise abortive insurrection. In Wales, in Birmingham, in Newcastle-under-Lyne, in Bristol, Glasgow, Nottingham, and Manchester, as well as in London itself, risings took place. The commercial depression and consequent misery of the people helped to swell the numbers of those who met to attack the existing authority. In the serious affrays which followed, most bloodshed took place in Wales, and in the neighbourhood of Manchester. It was as well, said many, to die by the sword as by starvation. Attacks upon the property of the middle-class were counselled by the leaders. At Birmingham this advice was taken to the letter; for ten days the town was in the hands of the people, and the middle-class in fear of sack and pillage. In the end, the police having been beaten, and many houses sacked and burnt, the military were called in and "order" was restored among the starving people at the cost of many lives.

The most serious of these disturbances took place between 1839 and 1842, and so menacing was the attitude of the people that, to the most experienced observers from other countries, and even to Englishmen themselves, this country seemed on the eve of a revolutionary outbreak exceeding in fury and in its ultimate aims any which history records.* A French writer of this period says, in 1842, that there had been permanent revolt in Great Britain for seven whole years. This

Republicans. This, W. J. Linton and others discovered, and tried to remedy. But a middle-class Republic may easily be worse than a monarchy for the mass of the people. Witness France to-day (1883).

*The records of Chartist agitation are to be found in the *Northern Star*, and other advanced journals.

is in some sense an exaggeration, but matters were certainly in a very different and far more troublous condition in our great industrial centres during these long years of oppression for the workers than our middle-class chroniclers have ever set forth. The Chartists, in the north of England at any rate, combined social with political demands; they meant, if they gained the upper hand, to put the people on a very different plane in regard to all which goes to make the health and comfort of civilised men from that in which they then moved. Chartism, said Stephens, to an enormous gathering on Kersall Moor, is no mere political question, it is a knife and fork question: the Charter for us means good lodging, good eating and drinking, good wages, and short hours of labour. Henry Vincent, Ernest Jones, Feargus O'Connor, Frost, held at times little different language. After the collapse of the "physical force men," in 1842 attempts were made to combine the reformers again in favour of peaceful methods, Owen's schemes of home colonisation, socialism, and co-operation gaining ground at the same time.* The Government still continued the system of spying and employment of *agents provocateurs*, which had found favour at the beginning of the century. Many arrests took place, Bronterre O'Brien was imprisoned for eighteen months for words he never uttered, Ernest Jones was likewise put in gaol, and his health injured by confinement. Such men as these, and those who fell in the

* The two parties among the Chartists, those who were for peaceful methods, and those who were for physical force, were both partly right and partly wrong. The "physical force" men had not the force to carry their programme, and might, therefore, well have preached peace till they had; the peaceable men could never hope to carry wholesale measures by vote, and, therefore, might as well have set to work to organise their force.

fighting were the martyrs of the English proletariat, and whenever again the workers of our country combine in earnest to free their class from capitalist thraldom, let them not be unmindful of those who, in less happy days, struggled and suffered to save the poor who should come after from oppression and wrong.

The Chartist movement came to an end on the 10th April 1848, when a public meeting was held on Kennington Common. London was filled with troops by the Duke of Wellington, who was careful to keep them out of sight; and special constables were sworn in by the thousand among the middle-classes, who were seriously afraid that the wage-slaves had at last awakened to a sense of their power. Nor can it be fairly contended that resort to force was not meant. Taught by their failure six years before, the Chartists had tampered with the loyalty of several regiments in the country districts, if not in London. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the leaders were daunted at the preparations made by the Government, and Chartism disappeared as an active force in English politics. That it was at last a distinct protest against capitalist rule cannot be disputed by anyone who studies the literature which was distributed, or the speeches made at the meetings. The republican sentiments, besides, which found full and free expression at this time among the Chartists, were not very palatable to the trading class, who saw that the denunciations of the Guelphs were coupled with clamours for the repudiation of the National Debt, and proposals for alterations in banking and exchange, which could not but interfere with the profitable monopolies enjoyed by themselves. In any event, the Chartist agitation died down just at the moment when all

Europe was astir as it had not been since the shock of 1789 ; and England, where the antagonism between labour and capital was even then more marked than elsewhere, passed through the last period of international excitement with less disturbance than any other country.

It must not be supposed, however, that, whilst the agitation had been going on, the working-classes had desisted from those rough-and-ready attacks on machinery which had created so much alarm at an earlier period, or had abandoned the secret combinations into which they were forced prior to 1824. The truth, on the contrary, is that the two movements kept pace with one another. In town and country alike, isolated outrages were frequent; but these, of course, were to very little purpose.* Far more important was the growth of definite working-class combinations for economical objects. In 1824, the repeal of the law which absolutely prevented free association gave the Trade Unions an opportunity of carrying out openly, and on a large scale, the operations which they had previously conducted secretly on a small one. Trades Unions were then extended to every branch of industry, with the unconcealed intention of protecting the workers against the tyranny of the masters. This was a very different business from the isolated assaults upon specially obnoxious masters hitherto in vogue. The objects of the Trades Unions are now well understood, and they have forced from the middle-class—thanks to the repeal of the law against combination, in 1824 : a concession which would hardly have been gained from the House of Commons after 1832—reforms which

* "Captain Swing" had again a fine time of it in the agricultural districts. Incendiary fires were of constant occurrence. The thing became of serious national import. No wonder, for the condition of the agricultural labourers was nothing short of infamous to England.

could never have been obtained but by such general combinations. The Trades Unionists themselves frequently threw in their lot with the Chartists, and in Manchester and its neighbourhood in particular the whole movement was quite as much directed against the manufacturers as against the injustice of existing parliamentary representation.

Those who imagine that the working classes of this country gained such freedom as they have secured without resort to force should carefully study the history of this entire period from the end of the great war onwards. It was force, and the fear of force which really enabled the workers to get any measures whatever passed for their benefit. Nor is it to be disguised that the Trade Unions enforced combination and maintained the rule of each for all among themselves by fierce terrorism, not only at the outset, but for years afterwards. The recent outrages in Ireland upon traitors to the Land League were paralleled in every particular by the vengeance wrought upon "knob-sticks" and others, who betrayed their fellows in the class war which was being waged. Women were maltreated as well as men, and discipline was maintained in the industrial array by fear of death or mutilation. In regard to raising wages, the strikes and collective action have not, in the long run, produced as much effect as Trade Unionists imagine, and of course it is always said when this point is urged that the first object of these associations is to maintain their members when in sickness, &c. But by giving an organised support to the Ten Hours Bill and other Factory and Mine Legislation, they conferred an enormous benefit upon the people at large. Though an aristocracy of labour early developed itself as a caste among the workers, it had no such injurious influence as it has

now, when points such as these were to be striven for, and at a time when the capitalists denounced and vilified instead of courting and feeing the Trade Union leaders. The steady pressure which the Trade Unions brought to bear from without, while so much serious trouble was going on, helped materially to secure the reforms in factory legislation. Owen, the noble enthusiast, who first insisted upon the need for labour laws, Sadler, who took the lead in the House of Commons, Oastler, who agitated so vigorously, not to say furiously, outside would probably all have failed but for the organised action of the Trade Unions in regard to restrictions upon women and children's labour.

The bitter hatred which about the period of the commencement of the agitation for the Repeal of the Corn Laws manifested itself between the aristocracy and the capitalists, inducing the former to throw their influence for the time on the side of the people must also be taken account of. Thus, the main causes of the enaction of effective Labour Laws in the interest of the working classes during the first half of the present century, apart from the shock to the whole moral sense of Europe, which was given by the disclosures in the Reports of the Factory and Mines Commissions as to the awful slavery involved in capitalist tyranny, were—1. The dangerous, though unsuccessful, risings of the people which caused even the most heedless to give some attention to the condition of the proletariat. 2. The earnest efforts of Owen, Sadler, Oastler, the Trade Unionists, and later of the present Lord Shaftesbury to effect a change. 3. The rivalry between the landlords and the capitalists which made the former anxious to have the opportunity of exposing and crippling their enemies.

At first the dominion of capitalism came upon the

country with such a rush that the "barriers imposed by nature and morals, age and sex, day and night," were, as we have already seen, completely swept away. The one idea of the capitalist class was to increase the hours of work and to employ "cheap" labour, because in this way, under the system of unrestrained competition, they could make unheard-of profits at the expense of those whom they employed. For thirty years, notwithstanding the horrors set out in the official reports, the workers could obtain no real protection. Though between 1802, when the first act was passed, and 1833 three laws were placed on the Statute Book to regulate labour, not a farthing was voted to give them effect. They were consequently useless to all intents and purposes.

The Factory Act of 1833, which affected the cotton, wool, linen, and silk trades, was the first regulation which really benefited the workers. By this law the day's work in factories was to begin at half-past five o'clock in the morning, and to come to an end at half-past eight o'clock in the evening, that is to say fifteen hours. Within these limits any young person between thirteen and eighteen years of age might work, provided that not more than twelve hours labour was exacted, and that an hour and a half was allowed for meal times. The employment of children of less than nine years of age was, save in a few exceptional cases, prohibited: children between nine and thirteen might work eight hours a day—the average day's work of a horse if he is to be kept in health and strength. Night work was prohibited for all children between nine and eighteen. The House of Commons did its utmost [illegible] capitalists. Relays of children [illegible] that "freedom of

contract" might be maintained for adults to work as long as they pleased. It was at this time that Dr Farre said, "Legislation is equally necessary for the prevention of death in any form in which it can be prematurely inflicted, and certainly *this* must be viewed *as a most cruel mode* of inflicting it." But that did not in the least prevent the capitalists from agitating vigorously for the repeal of the law of 1833.

They did worse than this; they contrived by all sorts of devices to evade the Act itself, all the while keeping up a bitter clamour against its provisions. Having fifteen hours in which they could do what they pleased, they shifted the "hands" about so that the factory inspectors found it almost impossible to check the breaches of the law. From 1838, however, the factory workers had combined to make a ten hours bill their battle cry in the economical field, as they had made the Charter their political manifesto. Moreover, a few manufacturers found that ten hours' work might be made almost as profitable as a longer spell if skill were used in adapting improved machinery; and others were anxious to obtain the support of the workers in the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws, as the aristocracy desired to gain their assistance against that measure. Hence the Factory Act of the 7th June 1844. By this Act "freedom of contract" on the part of women was put an end to. Women over eighteen years of age were placed under the same rules as young persons, and their toil limited to twelve hours a day. Children under thirteen were not allowed to work more than six hours and a half a day; the system was also sternly repressed, and re fully secured. The result of all t the hours of the adult male

workers were likewise limited, owing to the manner in which, under the factory system, all workers dovetail into one another, and the co-operation of women, children, and "young persons" had become indispensable in the work of the day. This day's work of twelve hours lasted, therefore, from 1844 till 1847. Then by the new law of 8th June 1847, eleven hours was fixed as the day's work up to 1st May 1848; but from and after that date, ten hours became the rule.

This first victory was not gained without a last and fierce effort on the part of the capitalist class to prevent its becoming effective. Everything, also, seemed in their favour. In 1846-47, there was a great crisis in the commercial affairs of the country. Short time and closed factories were the rule, rather than the exception. Many of the workpeople were in need and in debt. It might have been thought, therefore, that they would gladly accept longer hours to make up for lost time, pay their debts, redeem their goods from pawn, get new clothes for themselves and their families.* The manufacturers did their best to push them into such a frame of mind. They reduced wages wherever possible to the largest amount they could; they got up sham petitions and wrote forged letters to the papers in the name of the workers. They denounced the inspectors as revolutionary ogres who devoured the workers with their insatiable humanitarianism. All to no purpose. The factory hands would have nothing to say to the philanthropic views of their good employers in their favour.

They failed, therefore, for the moment; but after the downfall of the Chartists, on the 10th April 1848, and the general rising on the continent of Europe, they made a last

* Report, Inspector of Factories, 31st October 1848, p. 16.

determined effort to upset the whole scheme of legislation which thus interfered with them. Taking advantage of clauses in the still unrepealed Acts of 1833, 1844, and 1847, they resorted to every device which could irritate the adult male workers, and evaded the laws in relation to women and children. The county magistrates absolutely aided the capitalists in their shameful slave-driving, and failed to support the inspectors. Even the government was intimidated to such an extent that Sir George Grey actually wrote, on the 5th August 1849, to the factory inspectors that they need not enforce the law. Luckily the English inspectors, headed by that fearless, vigorous, and noble champion of the well-being of the people, Mr Leonard Horner, refused to pay any attention to this cowardly direction.

But the system of relays which rendered inspection nugatory, was carried out vigorously, in spite of the law, and the Court of Exchequer decided on the 8th February 1850, that the factory owners were practically acting legally in their wholesale evasion of the clauses which restricted the labour of women and young persons. This decision led at once to an agitation among the workers. They knew well that the great motive of the capitalists in all this chicanery was to return to the happy period of fifteen hours a day for adults, either by fair means or foul. Their agitation became so menacing that the factory owners gave way, and the law of the 5th August 1850 was a compromise between masters and men. Not, however, until 1853 was an Act passed which finally rendered the Acts of 1850 and 1847, in combination with ...vious Acts of 1833 and 1844, really valid against ...r-ceasing efforts of the capitalists to evade them.

Thus half-a-century had passed since the enactment of the first Factory Act, and all this while our philanthropists were sending out missionaries to all parts of the earth, and were declaiming about the infamies of the slave trade, though women and children at home were perishing for the want of protection.* Then, at last, the absolute necessity for

* THE FACTORY GIRL'S LAST DAY.

'Twas on a winter's morning,
The weather wet and wild,
Three hours before the dawning
The father roused his child;
Her daily morsel bringing,
The darksome room he paced,
And cried "The bell is ringing,
My hapless darling, haste!"

"Father, I'm up, but weary,
I scarce can reach the door,
And long the way and dreary—
Oh, carry me once more!
To help us we've no mother;
And you have no employ;
They killed my little brother—
Like him I'll work and die."

Her wasted form seemed nothing—
The load was at his heart;
The sufferer he kept soothing
Till at the mill they part.
The overlooker met her,
As to her frame she crept,
And with his thong he beat her
And cursed her as she wept.

Alas! what hours of horror,
Made up her latest day;
In toil, and pain, and sorrow
They slowly passed away.
It seemed, as she grew weaker,
The threads the oftener broke;
The rapid wheels [illegible] quicker,
And heavier [illegible] like.

interfering to prevent women from being completely broken down by the greed for surplus value, the unavoidable duty devolving upon the State to see that the population does

The sun had long descended,
But night made no repose ;
Her day began and ended
As cruel tyrants chose.
At length a little neighbour
Her halfpenny she paid,
To take her last hour's labour,
While by her frame she laid.

At last, the engine ceasing,
The captives homeward rushed ;
She thought her strength increasing—
'Twas hope her spirits flushed.
She left, but oft she tarried ;
She fell and rose no more,
Till, by her comrades carried,
She reached her father's door.

All night, with tortured feeling,
He watched his speechless child ;
While, close beside her kneeling,
She knew him not, nor smiled.
Again the factory's ringing
Her last perceptions tried ;
When, from her straw bed springing,
"'Tis time !" she shrieked, and died !

That night a chariot passed her,
While on the ground she lay ;
The daughters of her master
An evening visit pay ;
Their tender hearts were sighing
As negro wrongs were told,
While the white slaves lay dying
Who gained their father's gold !

Michael Sadler, the author of these verses, was a Member of Parliament, and author of a work on Population, refuting the foolish theories thus. He was a fearless champion of the rights of the people in well as in England, though, strange to say, he sat on the ide of the House.

not utterly deteriorate to satisfy the capitalists' lust for gain was recognised with regard to the greater part of the Factory industry. From 1847, "freedom of contract" cannot be said to be a portion of our State policy. The pseudo-science of political economy which bourgeois economists have formulated, here met with its first great check.

But any survey of the movements of this period would be very imperfect which failed to touch upon the great agitation for the Repeal of the Corn Laws. This, let us remember, was said to be undertaken in the interests of the working classes especially. They were to gain more than any others from the removal of those taxes upon food, which had been imposed after the great war, in order to secure additional rents for landlords, or additional profits for farmers. Unquestionably, the landlords did in some considerable measure benefit by a system which secured their tenants against outside competition; and a method of taxation which, under existing conditions of production for profit, taxes the community at large for the benefit of any special class is highly objectionable. The people whose wages did not by any means keep pace with the rise in the price of provisions during the war, and who were in miserable case afterwards at once detected in the Corn Laws an attempt to maintain those prices. They showed, by their riots in 1815, very clearly what they thought of the matter then. But in considering the Repeal agitation, and the effects which it produced, it is necessary to go a little deeper into the economical facts of the case, to take account of the time at which it was started, and to recall the representations made to the working-classes by the men who were the principal movers in the business.

For it must not be forgotten that the reputation of an

entire political party has been built up on the success of this repeal agitation. Free Trade has been the capitalist's one cry to the people. When any democrat has ventured to doubt whether manufacturers who are daily engaged in making profit out of the unpaid labour of their "hands," whether the very men who most bitterly opposed the Factory Acts and all other measures which limited their right to gain as much as possible at the expense of their countrymen, when any fearless writer or speaker has questioned whether such people as these could, as a class, fairly represent the workers out of whose toil they gained enormous fortunes, the answer has always been :—"Just think of the Corn Laws ; see how we spent money and never spared ourselves to bring about the repeal of those obnoxious regulations. Would you fly in the face of Free Trade and talk flat blasphemy against men who have secured the country cheap food ?"* Mr John Bright, in particular, has never ceased to hold up himself and his class as the benefactors of England on the strength of this glorious achievement against landlord selfishness and tyranny, and his successors have taken up the wondrous tale. But how stand the facts in relation to this marvellous act of devotion and self-sacrifice on the part of a class whose motto in all the ordinary affairs of life is nothing for something? Surely there must be something below the surface here, some trifle at least of personal gain which should induce—as it certainly did induce—people who are so keenly alive to their own interests to subscribe hundreds of thousands of pounds to ensure the repeal of these particular laws. We shall see there was.

hartists steadily preached to the workers that if they e in Corn without Nationalisation of the Land and they might easily find themselves worse off than

According to the law which regulates competition wages in all countries where the workers are divorced from the means of production, a law which is admitted by the chief middle-class economists, wages on the average amount to just so much as enable the workers to maintain themselves in the "standard of life" of their class or trade as long as capital needs them, and to hand on the same lot to their successors. Now this being the case it is manifest that anything which tends to cheapen the absolutely necessary products that make up this "standard of life" tends also to reduce the number of hours in the day during which the worker toils to replace the labour-value of the wages paid in order to enable him to buy the goods which shall keep him in the usual conditions of his class. That is to say, if workers as a class can be induced to live on a cheaper sort of food, to lodge worse, or to clothe themselves in cotton instead of in wool, if they are driven to compete against one another on this lower scale then the capitalist gets more hours of unpaid labour for himself and those who divide this surplus-value so produced with him. But, if instead of taking worse food or clothing the cost of that which the workers are accustomed to is reduced, then the same result follows. Wheat costing less than it did before, for instance, the competition wage-earners can afford to take lower wages than they would otherwise get, and the difference must go in the long run not into the worker's but into the capitalist's pocket. Repeal of the Corn Laws therefore meant increased profits for the capitalist, possibly even, owing to increased population, increased rents for the landlord; but it did not of itself benefit the working class one atom in theory, and I shall be able to prove later irrefragably that it has not in practice. The agitation for the Repeal of the

Corn Laws was a capitalist move entered upon for their own benefit, pushed with vigour expressly in order to baulk the chartists and socialists, at the same time that it crippled the landlords, and was carried to completion in the capitalist interests alone.

Cobden, himself essentially a buy-cheap-and-sell-dear economist, admits that it was distinctly a middle-class movement, and that it met with very little unpaid support from the workers.* Why should it? When the agitation first began in 1838, the chartist movement was just organising itself in earnest. Such men as the socialist leaders of course had seen through the trick at once. The big loaf and the little loaf which were paraded through the streets, the tons of literature calling for cheap bread which were distributed through the country could not gull anyone who saw even a little below the surface. At this very period, 1838 to 1846, Mr Bright and Mr Cobden were denouncing Trade Unions with all the force of their oratory as tyrannous and illegal combinations,† and were declaring that the Factory Acts were monstrous interferences with the liberty of the subject. Others of their class were more shrewd, for they proclaimed to the factory hands that if only they would gain Free Trade for them then it would no longer be necessary for the capitalists to oppose the enactment of the Ten Hours Bill. By degrees the middle-class

* Mr John Morley's Life of Cobden is perhaps the worst service which could have been done to the memory of that worthy. It will remain a well-written record of middle-class humbug when the hollowness of capitalist free trade has long been exposed.

† "Depend upon it nothing can be got by fraternising with trades unions. They are founded upon principles of brutal tyranny, and monopoly. I would rather live under a Dey of Algiers than a Trades Committee."—*Cobden.* Capitalism being, as we have seen above, full of true tolerance and brotherly love.

programme, backed as it was by heaps of money and supported by at least two orators of the first rank, Mr Bright and Mr Fox, made head against the working men's Charter and their Ten Hours Bill. Visions of the magnificent condition of the labourers when England should once have free imports were held out to the gaze of the inhabitants of the great cities. Poverty and want should flee away from all who were willing to work, misery should be unknown, the poor-houses would have no inmates.* Many of the workers were quite taken in. The political economists made common cause with their capitalist friends in thus misrepresenting the truth. In the end, as all know, the agitation became too strong to be resisted. Sir Robert Peel gained credit by playing into the hands of the capitalists he belonged to at the expense of the landlords who had adopted him as their leader; the working class were completely cajoled out of the genuine reforms in a political direction which they might fairly have hoped to obtain, and the success gave fresh vigour to the capitalists who, when once the measure in which they were directly interested was carried, turned round and opposed the Ten Hours' Bill more furiously than ever.†

* The dark colours in which they painted the misery of the people did something of course to call public attention to other points than the taxes on food. But the nonsense talked to gull the workers almost surpasses belief. Mr Fox, for instance, speaking at a great public meeting in Covent Garden Theatre, declared that the abolition of protection would put an end to pauperism, and predicted, in a passage of the most stirring eloquence, that ere many years had passed, work-houses in ruins would record the break up of protection in the same way that castles in ruins recal the downfall of feudalism.

† That Free Trade is beneficial to the whole community when exchange is controlled by the producers no man would, I should hope, contest. There is no reason why each country should not grow and manufacture that which it can produce with least expenditure of human labour, and exchange such produce on equal terms. This must

Unquestionably the anti-Corn-Law agitation, was one of the great causes of the failure of the Chartists to carry any portion of their political programme. It was a red herring trailed across the path of the democracy. If the working class had held aloof from their most dangerous enemies the capitalists, and had used their organised force to insist upon concessions before they moved at all, they would scarcely have failed to secure some advantage. Bigoted as the landlord party was and is, opposed as its members are to almost all that real reformers hold dear, the workers were then in a position, but for this subsidised Free Trade agitation, to have formed a party of their own which would have held the balance between Tories and Liberals. Their failure, as I have said, was the result of no accident. The workers and their leaders were too unorganised to act. The middle-classes had not yet reached their full development, nor proved as they have now their utter incompetence to deal with the problems of the near future. So they won. It was a great triumph indeed for the manufacturers, and well might they give Mr Cobden £80,000. Not only had they utterly defeated their enemies, the landed gentry, but they had completely cajoled the mass of the working class leaders. From this time forward the political economy which has found favour with labouring Englishmen, has been precisely that which their employers would naturally be most anxious that they should accept. In place of Ernest Jones and Julian Harney, Lovett, Stephens, Bronterre O'Brien, and Feargus O'Connor, instead of Cartwright, Cobbett, and Owen, a whole gang of self-seeking manufacturers who call

be advantageous to all. But capitalist free trade means simply commercial war carried on at the direct expense of the producing class for the benefit of the capitalist class.

all below the aristocracy of labour the "residuum," and denounce attempts to free the people from their thraldom, as playing into the hands of the Tories, have come forward as "Tribunes of the People." The time is close at hand when the pretensions of these men will be scouted, and their record of selfishness and greed will be contemned.

Englishmen, indeed, are too apt to forget their own history. But when they look back at the long struggle which lasted through the first half of this century, they will see clearly, that bad as was the action of the aristocracy, infamous as were the devices to which they resorted to prevent free Englishmen from taking advantage of their freedom, the worst enemies of the true welfare of the people throughout were those hypocritical employers who, whilst pretending to champion the cause of the workers, never ceased to oppose all measures which should help in any degree to release women and children from their tyranny, and never hesitated to misrepresent and to denounce the combinations by which alone men could help themselves. Nor were they without weapons to bend the workers to their will. Any workman who took an active part in political or social movements was liable to be at once discharged by his employer. This would probably mean his ruin, for other employers would refuse to give him work, the man being thus reduced to starvation or driven into the poor-house. Such cases of "boycotting" were frequent throughout this social struggle. It was on this account that the Trade Unions were at first compelled to pay their secretaries or other active officials a salary. Happily, since 1824, the workers have secured more and more freedom of combination; and the growth of classes who do not directly live upon the labourers, has strengthened their resistance to immediate capitalist brutality.

Thus it will be seen that the hundred years from 1750, or the accession of George III. in 1760, to the collapse of the Chartist movement in 1848, was a period of continuous, and at times, embittered struggle on the part of the working classes, first for political, and next for social as well as political rights.

The loss of the American Colonies, though serious from many points of view, did not gravely injure our trade; what mischief was done, in fact, was more than made up by the conquest of India, and the establishment of our maritime supremacy over France, Spain, and Holland. The long war with France no doubt set back political and social progress, and greatly exhausted the country. But here again our conquests abroad, and still more the extraordinary development of the great machine industry at home, which gave us command of the markets of the world, resulted in a vast increase of national wealth after all expenditure and sacrifices had been allowed for. Unfortunately no attempt was made to secure the mass of the people against the effects of reaction at the end of the war, or against the inevitable results of the faulty distribution of wealth, due to the concentration of the means of production in so few hands. Hence the riots, the turbulence, and at length the organised but futile revolt of the workers as shown in the Chartist movement.

The Reform Bill of 1832 gave power into the hands of the middle class completely, as the Civil War of the seventeenth century and accession of William III. had given it partially; and this, the result of a compromise in which the workers who had formed the propelling power were left with the shells, whilst their middle-class allies took the oyster, has been paraded as a glorious political victory for the people.

Even the success of the working classes in restricting the hours of labour was not achieved without outrages which frightened the whole community. There was a manifest antagonism between the wage-earners and their masters, which, but for extraneous circumstances, might easily have led to a grave social war. But the main point is that from the end of the French war until 1848, a period which we have almost come to consider as one of perpetual peace and prosperity, because there were no European complications of importance, England was suffering from continuous internal turmoil more than any other great power. The middle class remained masters of the field in the end, it is true; but none the less the wage-earners had opened the campaign against the capitalists, which, though conducted in very tame fashion of late years, can scarcely fail to lead to grave difficulty in the near future, unless singular discretion is used by the luxurious classes.

As it was, the great Revolutionary wave of '48 produced little effect in this country. Then, for the first time, it became apparent to keen observers, that, apart even from the economical issues involved, nothing short of an international combination among the working classes of Europe could possibly secure for them political victory. At the outset success seemed probable. But although in Paris, Utopian Socialist experiments were tried in earnest, and all over Europe kings were toppled from their thrones and Republics took their place, there can be no doubt that the movement was, in the main, more national than social. The ideas of nationalist middle-class men, such as Mazzini, Kossuth, or Blind, had far more influence than the far-reaching views of international socialists. Gradually, therefore, each people was in turn subdued by the help of the military force of its

neighbour, barbarous Russia leading the reactionary host. The French bourgeois Republic drove the Italian Republicans from Rome, the Hungarians helped to defeat the Croats, and England, not yet recovered from the Chartist scare or the Irish rising, was content to mutter liberal principles under her breath, and leave those whom we had promised to assist to be crushed without our aid. All this, however, is but a portion of middle-class history. The workers were beaten back to their hovels and workshops all over the civilised world. In 1848, as in 1789, the bourgeoisie had the organisation, the money, and an accurate knowledge of their own objects.

Yet those who held that in England, at least, a great social upheaval was inevitable, had some justification for their opinion. The awful famine of 1847 in Ireland had been followed by an organised revolt, which seemed more formidable than it really was, and the crisis of the same year had intensified the contrasts here at home. England with its great factories and impoverished workpeople, its great landlords and miserable agricultural labourers, its political freedom and social oppression, its balanced constitution and general disfranchisement, seemed the very country where such ideas as those embodied in the famous Socialist manifesto of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels would find acceptance. The first point in that programme, Nationalisation of the Land, had been handed on from Thomas Spence to the most active of the Chartist leaders, the Irish in the great cities openly sympathised with their brethren on the other side of St George's Channel, and for the time were at one with English revolutionists. In short, the situation looked so threatening that the upper and middle classes drew together in anticipation of grave trouble,

regarding every meeting of Trade Union representatives as indicative of organised revolt. Wild schemes of all sorts were discussed among the workers. Nevertheless with April 10th, 1848, all the serious agitation may be said to have come to an end, and for the leaders there was nothing left save to try to educate the working classes of their countrymen up to a higher standard of social and political intelligence. A few may still be found who are imbued with the teaching of the men of '48; but the mass of Englishmen of the producing class are at present far behind their brethren on the continent of Europe and in America, in all the qualities which can eventually lead to the emancipation of their fellows. A new generation, however, is now rising up, and new economical forces are at work which will probably renew in more formidable shape the agitations of the first half of the present century before its close.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREAT MACHINE INDUSTRY.

By the introduction of the great machine industry, where steam or water power replaced the motive power of human beings or animals, capital necessarily became more completely master of the situation than ever. From the end of the eighteenth century until the present time the economical history of England has been little more than the record of its conquests, and the annals of the increase of its domination, together with the growth of resistance by the workers. Middle-class economists define capital as simply the accumulation of the results of past labour devoted to assist present production. This is of course true, in a certain sense. Where capital, in the form of accumulated labour, belongs to the family or household, it is used for the benefit of all members of that family or household. So with the wider circle of a village community or tribe, where the accumulation of past labour is turned to the advantage of all who belong to the village, tribe, or collection of tribes, whose members live in collective communities, and all gain by the common industry.

But capital, in our modern sense, is something quite different from the results of past labour accumulated to serve the purposes of all. It constitutes an epoch in social production when the accumulated labour and the means of production, including the land, are in the hands of

one class, and are used, not for the advantage of all, but to pile up wealth for the few. The workers, where this system is in full development, are obliged to sell their labour-force for mere subsistence-wages, and the object of all production is to make a profit for the classes who own the capital. Dead labour and living labour are, so to say, placed in direct, and, for the living labour, ruinous antagonism. The labourers are not employed until it is quite clear to the capitalist that, on the average, the wage-earners will return the full value of the wages which he pays them out of the commodities they produce, and a surplus value, that is to say a good deal more than the value of their wages into the bargain for the benefit of the non-producers, who own the accumulated labour or capital.

In a society such as ours, where this system has been going on for generations, it is natural that men should think that there is really something in the very nature of labour itself which should produce a profit—that the labourers ought, of necessity, to give a profit to the class which is so good as to employ them and organise their labour for them. Or it has been urged that, for example, there is something in the "natural" increase of sheep or cattle, or the fecundity of seed-corn, a portion of which is but the due return to the capitalist who has made an advance to the agriculturist destitute of such cattle and sheep, or seed-grain, in the first instance.* In like manner, some have contended that machinery itself, being a labour-saving apparatus alike in agriculture and manufacture, producing, that is, a larger amount of wealth for a less expenditure of human labour-force, also gives large extra value in addition to the wear and tear, and to this extra value the capitalist

* See Henry George, for instance, "Progress and Poverty," p. 168.

is entitled. But here is manifestly a grave error. The value of cattle or of corn in exchange depends, on the average, simply upon the amount of social human labour needed to bring them forward for exchange. A good season means only that less labour has been required to produce a given number of beasts, or to grow a given weight of grain, and that, therefore, other things being equal, their value in exchange for other articles is less than it would be in a bad season, when the same amount of labour produced less of the same goods or food.

So in manufacture. What does a machine do in itself? It works up a useful article with less of human labour than if such a machine did not exist, and, therefore, if the same quantity of human labour is employed as before, produces a far greater amount of wealth. But the machine adds no value to the commodity beyond the wear and tear, or the amount of labour which would be needed, after having been used for a certain time, to put it in as good a condition as when work was begun. The value added to the raw material during the process of manufacture—and, strictly speaking, no material is so "raw" but that human labour has been expended upon it—is, therefore, no more than the quantity of human labour embodied in the commodity during such manufacture, including the necessary amount required to replace the oil, gas, coal, waste, and wear-and-tear of the machine.

But the owner of a machine is of course anxious to make as much profit as he can, no matter whence the profit may be derived, and he, therefore, pushes on the work of the machine as quickly as he can. For the capitalist has to face another danger besides the natural wearing-out of his machine, the possibility, namely, indeed the certainty,

that a machine of improved construction will sooner or later be produced, which will turn out goods of the same description with less labour, and, therefore, cheaper than his own. In this way, not only will his machine itself be of less value, but his power of making a profit will be greatly reduced, or altogether destroyed. When this takes place, the capitalist invariably tries to indemnify himself against this most injurious form of competition by reducing the rate of wages which he pays to his labourers, so as to be able to sell as cheap, at their expense, as the owner of the new and superior machine; just as when a superior machine is first introduced, the fortunate possessor always strives to get the fullest possible gain from this temporary advantage by an excessive extension of the hours of labour for his "hands." Thus in the same way that the workers compete against one another to get employment so fiercely that their average wages constantly tend below the level where the price of labour, or the standard of life, suffices for healthy existence; so the capitalists, though making large profits, as a class, out of labour, carry on their competition with one another by a reduction of prices towards the point where profit for many individuals among them becomes impossible.

Now, when a labour-saving machine is first introduced in regard to any article which is in common use, its effect is to depreciate the value of the force of labour, both directly and indirectly, inasmuch as less wages are needed to maintain the same standard of life, thus giving a relatively larger surplus value to the capitalist.* The labour employed,

* When national production and exchange are carried on without any regulation, the development of society and the increased productiveness of social labour results in giving the working-class an ever-decreasing proportion of such national production in the shape of wages. Rodbertus, 1850.

also, produces articles of a higher value in the social exchange of the day than the actual quantity of human labour embodied in them. That is to say, these articles, though produced with less labour than others of the same quality, are worth the same as they are in the market to the capitalist. Consequently, and by reason of these effects of the machine, the capitalist can replace the value of the wages he pays to his competition wage-earners by a smaller fraction of their total day's work than he could before. But in order that he may derive the full profit from this cheaper production, and consequent large relative increase of surplus value, he must have a wider market for the sale of his goods. So he begins to undersell his neighbours all round, at that price between the actual price current and the cost of production to himself, which, on calculation, will give him the largest and the quickest profit. For instance, if the article were selling before the new machine came into play at two shillings the yard or the pound, the capitalist would sell at eighteen pence or a shilling (as he should judge for his best advantage), if he himself were producing at sixpence.*

But now consider how the machine affects the total

* "It is important to insist on this point, that what determines value is not the time in which a thing has been produced, but the minimum of time in which it can be produced, and this minimum is fixed by competition." Marx, "Misère de la Philosophie," p. 45.

"Every new invention which enables that to be produced in one hour which has hitherto been the product of two hours, depreciates all products of the same description which are found on the market. Competition compels the producer to sell the product of two hours as cheap as the product of one hour. Competition realises the law according to which the relative value of a product is determined by the time of labour necessary to produce it. The time of labour serving as measure of the sale value, becomes thus the law of a continual *depreciation* of labour." P. 44.

amount of surplus value produced. The object of the machine is, of course, to produce the same amount of wealth, that is to say, of commodities for exchange, by employing a few hands that was formerly obtained by the employment of many. But when the capitalist employs fewer hands—though he may obtain, as stated above, a much larger relative surplus value out of each — the fewer hands he employs the less surplus value will be produced; since each individual worker, even where no restriction exists, can give no more than a certain amount of surplus labour-value in the day. No man, that is, can work twenty-four hours in the day continuously, and even if he did, the fewer hands would produce a smaller total surplus value than some greater number who each produced a smaller surplus value. Here, then, is another reason for getting the most out of the hands possible, by an extreme length of hours to make up for the decrease in the numbers at work, owing to the superior machinery—the total amount of surplus value depending, of course, upon the total number of hours of unpaid labour the workers altogether give to the capitalist, after they have earned the value of their wages.

Even, therefore, when the number of hours are reduced and regulated by law, steps are at once taken to increase the amount of surplus value attainable by the capitalist by increasing the rapidity of the machinery, and thus greatly adding to the intensity of the work. It stands to reason, for instance, that a man who attends to 120 revolutions of a machine in ten hours, really does one-fifth more work than he did when he followed but 100 revolutions of a machine for twelve hours. More work is got out of him in less time. This was [illegible]ally done in our mills and factories directly the T[illegible] Act was enfor[illegible]

and the same or a larger quantity of labour was compressed into the ten hours that had formerly been spread over twelve. Thus under the dominance of the machine industry the workers are in theory, as in practice, the slaves of the machine instead of using the machines as their inanimate slaves. They must work in accordance with the will of the machine, over whose greater or less rapidity they have no control whatsoever any more than they have over the higher or lower price at which their master may sell the labour-value which they have provided him with. Men and women no longer use tools, they are used by their own tools in the shape of the machines moved by steam or water power. The labourers, in such circumstances, become mere flesh and blood mechanism, at the mercy of a great mechanical force, are literally and truly slaves of their own production, and their bodies and minds are stunted and enfeebled by the very nature of their employment, even apart from its length or its intensity. No great strength and no great skill are required: deftness of hand and enduring persistence of toil are all that is needed.

Further, as has been seen in practice, the effect of the machine is constantly to throw men out of employment, and to create, under existing conditions of production, a permanent over-population, in the face of increasing wealth. The amount of surplus value produced, the return, that is, to the total capital embarked in machine industry, is increased at the expense of increasing uncertainty and excessive competition for the labourers. The machines soon beat the hand-workers out of the field in every trade; but, the workers at the machine themselves are ame uncertainty any day.

of this in actual life may here be given. A

contractor, furnishing stamps to the Post-Office, was employing three hundred men on skilled work, at the average wages of twenty-eight shillings a week. These were good wages, as times go, and the contractor being engaged on a Government job, the men might fairly look upon their positions as secure for life. Many of them had actually been in the service of that same firm twenty or thirty years. But now, what happened? Suddenly, without a word of warning beyond the week's or fortnight's notice demanded by the law, the men were sent about their business—were discharged without recourse. Machines had been introduced which could do all, and more than all, the work the machines previously used could do, and women and children took the places of the men. Their average wages were about fourteen shillings a week, against the twenty-eight shillings paid to the men. Here, then, was a saving, an increase of the surplus value, for the capitalist at the rate of fourteen shillings per head of the men discharged. In all, the gain was 300×14, or not less than 4,200 shillings, or £210 per week on the total number of three hundred men discharged. An increase of profit of upwards of £10,000 a year, during the whole period of his contract, was the result, to the happy contractor, of the introduction of this labour-saving machine. But what of the result to the "hands" thus discharged? They went out upon the labour-market as unskilled labourers, most of them failing to find employment, as times were dull. The contractor did no worse than others are doing constantly, nor could he, individually, be blamed. Yet, here, one man gains an enormous fortune, whilst hundreds are thrown workless on the streets.

And this is civilisation, this is the organisation of labour

which some enthusiasts for what exists tell us workers should rightly pay for, this is that "order" which to disturb or rudely handle would bring upon us anarchy. Hear the workers in turn: listen to what they say—"What is order to you capitalists is anarchy to us workers: the system you hope to maintain we must—there is no other alternative before us—either master or destroy. We will not hand on to our children the misery, the uncertainty, the hopelessness which crush us who toil to-day. The machines which give you wealth give us the most grinding poverty. Nay, as you see, we are not even certain of the pittance we but now gained for your profit. What should improve our condition and lessen our labour renders our lot one of permanent insecurity. None can tell this week whether his wages shall be secure the next." Thus, theory and practice accord, and the superfluous portion of the population created by the machine crowd into other businesses, to depress wages by their competition, or sink into the "fringe of labour" and pauperism.

These are the "temporary inconveniences" of the capitalist system of production recognised by middle-class economists. But they are not temporary. The machine constantly throws adults out of employment. Ricardo, MacCulloch, Ure, even Fawcett and Mill confess that the tendency of the machines as they are improved is to do without male labour, or to decrease the price of that labour. Meanwhile, too, let us bear in mind that wages of labour are lowest precisely in those trades where the hours are longest. It is the excessive toil which receives the least remuneration; and women who work fourteen or sixteen hours a day can, as recent cases in the police court show, barely gain a livelihood or keep body and soul together. In the factories

where the ten hours law is in force wages have risen; where it still lasts fourteen or fifteen hours wages have fallen.* Here, then, in the very basis of our machine industry, we find the causes of perpetual discontent if only the men who work understood what is going on around them.

But on the other hand, urge the economists, there is compensation to all this, "If men are thrown out here they are employed there if capital invested in machinery reduces wages, or renders less money available for payment of wages which amounts to the same thing, still additional work at higher, or at any rate equal, remuneration can be found. Thus, though individuals may be harmed for the moment, the community, as a whole, is benefited, and even the discharged workers gain in the long run." Without taking account of the thousands of weavers in India absolutely starved to death by the competition of our cheap goods, it is enough to show that the compensations do not take place in the way supposed for our own people. The instance given above proves that, in that case at least, the break between the workmen and their means of gaining subsistence, or their undeserved reduction to a lower scale of wages through no fault of their own but simply to increase the gains of their employer, did not meet with any compensation. Moreover, the handloom weavers, whose miseries are recorded in all the reports of the earlier portion of this century, found themselves in the pauper graveyard long before any compen-

* Report of Inspector of Factories 31st October, 1863, p. 9. Cited in Marx, "Capital," p. 237. It is needless to point out how this under-payment of women fosters prostitution. It practically provides a never-ceasing stream of recruits to that miserable business. Hunger is the first cause of prostitution, wrote [illegible] Duchatelet, after having carefully examined all the causes of [illegible]otion in Paris. Our great capitalists turn hundreds and thou[illegible]sand young women on to the street every year.

sation began for their class. The only people who gain anything are the capitalists, who can buy the labour-force of these men out of work at a lower price than before.

For, say that a man has a capital of £10,000 carefully accumulated from the unpaid labour of the free workmen whom he has been so philanthropic as to employ. If he employs half of it in buying materials and half in paying wages, he could pay a hundred labourers £50 a year continuously. But now suppose he changes the proportions altogether. To start with, he employed £5,000 as constant capital, and £5,000 as variable capital for the payment of wages. Now he dismisses fifty labourers and buys a machine which costs him £2,500. Here £2,500 has become constant capital and has ceased to be available for payment of wages. Henceforth the capital of £10,000 will never employ more than fifty labourers, and will employ fewer at each improvement in the machine. Where is the compensation? Does the payment to the mechanics for the machine compensate the hands thrown out of employment? In any case the £2,500 originally went to pay salaries altogether.* In paying for the machine the £2,500 not only pays wages to the mechanics, but the materials necessary for its construction, and the surplus value taken by the owner as well. Besides, when once the machine is made it lasts till it is worn out, and to employ the mechanics continuously all the manufacturers in the line of business originally chosen must buy machines and discharge their hands. Every such operation, look at it how we may, means that the hands

ence between constant capital and fixed capital is of course
onomists, but for the general reader it is enough to say
l consists of what is expended in raw materials,
l up in process of manufacture. Fixed capital
achinery, &c.

discharged are deprived of their drafts upon food which were given to them by the employer in the first instance, and may be half-starved or find their way into the work-house before they are able to get similar drafts upon sustenance again. If they get fresh employment and renew the severed connection between themselves and their victuals, this is due to some new capital which comes on to the labour market and not to the capital which is already spent on the machine.*

Moreover, under our degrading system of division of labour, men cannot turn to any other work at a moment's notice. The aptitude has been ground out of them; consequently their position when discharged from employment is miserable in the extreme.

The only marvel is that any compensation should have been claimed by middle-class economists as existing under our present competitive system. Unquestionably the machine produces more and cheaper commodities than could otherwise be obtained, but used by a class against a class it becomes the means of enslaving a man to his own physical power; the wealth of the community is amassed for all but the worker.

But the great machine industry and capitalist production bring about other results which seriously imperil the labourer's steady employment or continuous well-being. Improved machinery needs fresh markets, as well as extended regions devoted to furnishing raw materials. India, America, Australia, China, become the providers of raw materials for English manufacturers, until such time as they build up factories of their own. Cotton, wheat, wool, silk are exported as our raw material from countries which,

* Marx, "Capital," p. 190.

however distant, or however varying in climate or government, become, in an economical sense, the hangers-on of our great industry at home. Being dependent upon other countries for our necessary food is, on many accounts, a most serious matter; but in effect, to be dependent even for our raw material binds up our welfare with the peace and stability of men in other lands to a degree which at times we scarcely appreciate. The war between the North and the South in the United States caused as much distress in Lancashire as if the food supply from America had been temporarily curtailed. A short supply of silk, or jute, or indigo at once makes itself felt in our industrial centres. The market, despite of all the efforts of governments to impose artificial restrictions, has become world-wide. There is a vast division of labour, whereby continents become practically the agricultural districts of our great industrial centres.

More than this, competition remains unrestrained, save by tariffs, in all the great dealings in the markets of the world, as it is at home. Manufacturers do not know, as a rule, what one another are doing. For instance, news reaches a house from its correspondent in India, or Australia, or China, that the goods previously encumbering that particular market have at last found a sale; that there has been a good harvest, a fine silk crop, an admirable season for wool or cattle, a splendid return from jute, or opium, or indigo; in fact that, in the judgment of the writer, business in that part of the world will not only be better for the moment, but that a heavier demand will certainly follow. Meanwhile, he recommends that large quantities of such goods should be shipped at once, so that rival may not step in first after the troubling of the perity. Similar advices reach other great firms

from their correspondents about the same time. Then the wholesale exporters give orders in hot haste, the manufacturers, who have probably heard of the improvement themselves, take heart and cautiously raise prices. They feel that dulness and short time and depression have passed away. There is lightness in the commercial air, and exhilaration pervades the whole atmosphere of business operations. Mills or factories begin to set to work in earnest to fill the orders which pour in from all quarters. More "hands" are needed to do the work. The "over-population" which Malthusians had been denouncing is absorbed in a twinkling, to enable the manufacturers to take advantage of the "good times."

The good news spreads, and with it the change of "tone." Those manufacturers who are first in the field order new and improved machinery.* This, for the time being, gives more work to mechanics and iron-masters. Their prosperity reacts in turn upon the miners and colliers. Prices rise all along the line, the people are in full employment at good pay, for they have soon demanded a rise in wages. In short, the manufacturers are in haste to get rich, the railways get full freights, the growers of raw material find that they can, at ruling rates, profitably grow more of the special staple in which they are interested. There is what, in American parlance, might be called a universal "boom." It seems impossible that a collapse can ever come again, for are not all interested in maintaining this general interchange of products? The working classes, in particular, hope that at last permanent employment at good wages is assured to them; pauperism falls off, and the

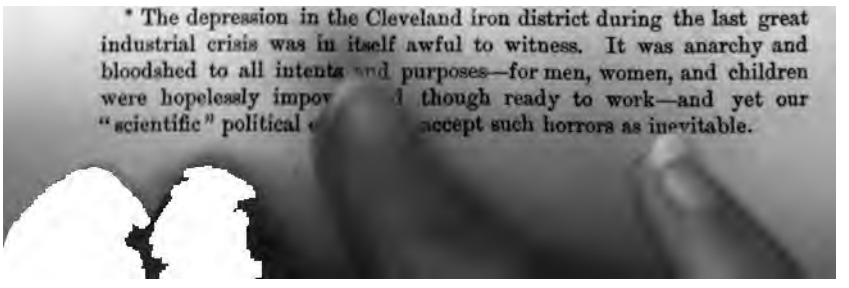
* Which, be it said in passing, increases the available supply of labour, and tends, besides, to keep wages from rising excessively.

reports in the columns of the daily newspapers from the great industrial centres are most satisfactory. The very whirl of business prevents men from seeing clearly what is going on around them.

For at this very moment the highest point has been reached. Those same correspondents who but now were so jubilant, send home doleful tidings to the effect that goods are not moving off as fast as they were, and counsel prudence as to further shipments. In the home market also, the rise in wages, the higher rate of interest, the increase of speculation in all sorts of hopeless enterprises or investments in foreign bonds, combine to produce a check at the same time. It is found that a portion of the demand has been due to speculation from the outset, or to the purchase of our own goods with our loaned capital. Furthermore, the rise of wages has driven manufacturers to get the better of their neighbours by introducing improved machinery, and thus to produce more at a lower price with fewer hands. At the very time, therefore, when all looks most hopeful, when business is most prosperous, and employment is most brisk—just at that instant the highest point has been reached in the progress of the industrial cycle, and ere long the downward movement commences. Suddenly then there is a great difficulty found in disposing of goods at a profit. The home and foreign markets are alike glutted. Even the cheaper raw material and improved machinery will not suffice to put matters on a better footing. Rather, those manufacturers who have such advantages intensify the crisis by pouring yet more goods at a lower price on an already overburdened market. Hence short time becomes the rule: men are discharged wholesale from all departments of industry.

There are plenty of people wanting clothes, food, house-room; but in order to give them employment, and thus to enable them to obtain these necessaries, the capitalist class must be able to employ them at a profit, and such profit the very glut of goods in the markets prevents. Hence comes the renewal of over-population on an enormous and even dangerous scale; whole districts are reduced to the very lowest level: it seems as if such misery could not longer endure.* The depression spreads to every department as prosperity had affected every interest. Where the first check comes matters little, sooner or later all are more or less injured, and we are in the midst of one of those ten-year crises, which, since the year 1825, have had world-wide effect. Such industrial crises, which are sometimes connected with financial upsets, but which may not always bring about the same results, have occurred every ten years for the last half-century. But the recurring periods have been shortened, and the crisis in each particular trade may not be absolutely contemporaneous with that in others. The destruction they involve to men and material is inconceivable.

When the pressure has lasted long enough for the over-production, as it is called, to work off, then the renewed demand begins, and the wheel works round once more. Again the workers who have been forced into the workhouse or out on the "tramp," again the unfortunate hands who have "clemmed" in silence and sadness, hoping for better times, are taken back to labour for their em-



* The depression in the Cleveland iron district during the last great industrial crisis was in itself awful to witness. It was anarchy and bloodshed to all intents and purposes—for men, women, and children were hopelessly impov[illegible] though ready to work—and yet our "scientific" political [illegible] accept such horrors as inevitable.

ployer's advantage and profit, only to be thrust down into deeper despair at the next stagnation, which is as sure to recur as are the seasons. Thus, in addition to all the uncertainty of new machines and inventions, which may interfere with his scanty wages at any moment, over and above all the evils a workman has to suffer from the revolutionary basis of modern production so opposed to the conservative, the too conservative, methods of old time—on the top of such never-ceasing chances and changes in the conditions of his daily labour, he is certain once in every ten years at least to suffer from a congestion in the labour market, owing to no fault of his own, which may throw him out of his former comparative comfort into the lowest abyss of misery and despair.

For the working class have no control whatsoever over the disposal of the goods which they themselves produce. They are not consulted as to whether these steps should be taken or that course abandoned. Labour has no say, cannot compare notes. There is socialisation in the workshop, in the factory, in the mine, on the farm; and anarchy, absolute unrestrained anarchy, in the exchange. Yet this, I say again, is the organisation of labour for which the labourers are asked to pay and be thankful for: this is the skilful management of production which the capitalist class and their hangers-on make a merit of. Wealth, wealth, ever more wealth here: uncertainty, depression, starvation, degradation for the men, women, and children whose labour alone gives value or produces goods. The sole object of the capitalist class being to obtain surplus value by extra
d labour, the relative over-population produced
s and the alternating series of elation and
greatly to their advantage. They are able to

make more profit in a shorter time. But these crises tend also to crush out the small factories, the small dealers, the small distributors, and the small handicraftsmen more than ever.

Each period of this description culminates in a whole series of bankruptcies, which, as a rule, means that the trade is driven into the hands of larger and yet larger producers and distributors. Thus the uncertainty of existence extends far even above the mere producer himself, and results in that feverish lust for gain which is one of the worst features in our modern society. All are in haste to get rich, partly because of the desire to live luxuriously, but much more because they hope to be clear of the possibility of being left in hopeless penury in their old age. The capitalist system renders essential the economy of the means of production in each separate establishment, but, on the other hand, this is effected by the most wholesale waste of the physical strength of the producers and their means of production, not to speak of the innumerable parasites engendered by the luxury it develops. Capitalist production, to repeat, depends upon the men and women who work being deprived of the means of production and obliged to sell themselves on the market for what is little more than a bare subsistence wage. But when once the system is established its continuance is necessarily ensured upon an ever-growing scale, until the producers themselves combine to take control of the whole means of production in the collective interest.

For the products of the producer continually escape from him into the hands of the class opposed to him. His force of labour is worked up, not only into merchandise, but into capital—into means of production which control him, into means of subsistence, which actually buy the worker him-

self body and soul.* He is the slave of his own production, and is bought with his own necessaries of life, which he himself furnishes in the form of exchangeable commodities. All this is disguised from the workers themselves by the daily or weekly sale of their labour-force; and the fiction that they enter upon a free contract with their employers induces them to stunt themselves permanently by serving the machines of another and hostile class. Their consumption of daily necessaries forces them to come day after day upon the market in order to sell themselves afresh to their employers who keep them thus in economical servitude. The relation of capitalist and wage-slave is day by day perpetuated.

"But higher wages," say some, "surely this would in some sort remedy the miserable position you describe. English labourers nowadays are at any rate free to combine, the voting power is increasing in their hands, cannot they master the situation in that way, and secure for themselves some comfort and security?" The conditions need stronger measures, valuable as combination is for every purpose. For the relative over-population which occasions such endless misery in times of depression, and is ever close at hand in the flushest times of trade, is directly due to the control by the capital class of the whole process of exchange, the increasing employment of machines owned by that class, and the growing proportion of constant to variable capital in every business. A man cannot keep his capital without increasing it; accumulation on a larger and larger scale is forced upon the capitalist, and at the same time the increase of the wage-earning class to be employed as administering xury, or in producing more and more surplus value s. The very payment of wages presupposes a cer-

* Marx, "Capital," p. 249.

tain amount of labour given for nothing, which on the average of cases in England is at least two-thirds of the day's work. Wages in fact, as already stated, are but an order upon a fraction of the value of the wage-earner's production.*

Take the best explanation by a middle-class economist of the phenomena of inflation and depression which has just been considered. What says Mr John Stuart Mill? This :—

"A manufacturer finding a slack demand for his commodity forbears to employ labourers in increasing a stock which he finds it difficult to dispose of; or if he goes on until all his capital is locked up in unsold goods, then at least he must of necessity pause until he can get paid for some of them. But no one expects either of these states to be permanent; if he did he would at the first opportunity remove his capital to some other occupation in which it would still continue to employ labour. The capital remains unemployed for a time during which the labour-market is over-stocked, and wages fall. Afterwards the demand revives and perhaps becomes unusually brisk, enabling the manufacturer to sell his commodity even faster than he can produce it; his whole capital is then brought into complete efficiency, and if he is able he borrows capital in addition, which would otherwise have gone into some other employment. At such times wages, in his particular occupation, rise. If we suppose what in strictness is not absolutely impossible, that one of these fits of briskness or of stagnation should affect all occupations at the same time, wages altogether might undergo a rise or a fall. These, however, are but temporary fluctuations; the capital now lying idle will next year be in active employment, that which is this year unable to keep up with the demand will in its turn be locked up in crowded warehouses, and wages

* See Chapter IV.

in these several departments will ebb and flow accordingly; but nothing can permanently alter general wages except an increase or diminution of capital itself (always meaning by the term the funds of all sorts destined for the payment of labour), compared with the quantity of labour offering itself to be hired."* Again, "Wages depend, then, on the proportion between the number of the labouring population and the capital or other funds devoted to the purchase of labour; we will say for shortness the capital. If the wages are higher at one time or place than another, if the subsistence and comfort of the hired labourers are more ample, it is for no other reason than because capital bears a greater proportion to population. It is not the absolute amount of accumulation or of production that is of importance to the labouring class; it is not the amount even of the funds destined for distribution among the labourers; it is the proportion between those funds and the numbers among whom they are shared. The condition of the class can be bettered in no other way than by altering that proportion to their advantage; and every scheme for their benefit which does not proceed on this as its foundation, is, for all permanent purposes, a delusion."

Mr John Stuart Mill was a Malthusian. His idea was that the working-classes ought to keep down their families to the number which should enable them to get each a larger amount of this imaginary wages-fund. Strange to say it never occurred to him that this phenomenon of inflation and depression takes place in countries where the population is stationary or even decreasing, as well as in lands where the

* J. S. Mill, "Principles of Political Economy," vol. i. p. 411. Mr Mill's deep sympathy with the people, and his life-long work on their behalf, gain him the respect even of those who differ most widely from his economical views.

number of the people increases. That there has been no want of capital in England to employ the people, is apparent to the most casual thinker. Without anticipating here a survey of the present condition of the labouring class, it is enough to say that the assessment to income-tax alone in 1882 was more than the total production of the United Kingdom in 1842, or roughly speaking, nearly £600,000,000 in the one case, and £500,000,000 in the other. The total income in 1882 may be put at not less than £1,300,000,000. Meanwhile the population of the United Kingdom has increased only from 28,000,000 to 35,000,000, and the number of those employed in actual production has very slightly increased. Neither the over-population theory to account for the miserable wages of the workers, nor the abstinence theory to account for the accumulation of capital, will hold water for a moment. What abstinence is there in taking so much extra labour for nothing, and then merely debating as to whether such surplus-value taken from the labourer shall be used to build larger factories or to expend in luxury in Paris? In either case the *enforced* abstinence is on the part of the labourer who gets less for his day's work than the labour-value he provides. The capitalist class takes relatively to the total production of the country an ever-increasing proportion of the wealth for its own use. Under our system of unregulated competition, the worker on the average gains nothing, and if he limits his family as a class and reduces the numbers of available hands—a thing practically impossible—he but accelerates the introduction of new machines, and in due time the re-creation of a relative over-population.

Here, however, is the true law of capitalist production, which completely cuts the ground from under the feet of

the bourgeois expounders of political economy. As Mr Mill speaks of the relative profit to be derived from slave and free labourers, as dependent upon the wages of the free labourer—that is to say, upon the amount of necessary wages or standard of life—he at least ought to have seen the truth, which is:—"The relation between the accumulation of capital and the rate of wages is only a relation between unpaid labour converted into capital, and the overplus of paid labour which this additional capital needs in order to set to work. This, then, is in no sense a relation between two terms independent of one another—that is to say, the magnitude of the capital on one side, and the number of the working population on the other—but it is only *a relation between the unpaid and the paid labour of the same working population.* If the quantum of unpaid labour which the working class supplies and the capitalist class accumulates increases itself with such rapidity, that in order to turn it into additional capital an extraordinary addition to the quantity of paid labour must be made, wages rise. Other things remain the same, unpaid labour diminishes in proportion. So soon, however, as this diminution reaches the point where the extra labour which feeds capital is no longer offered in the usual quantity, a reaction follows, a less portion of the income is turned into capital, and the accumulation slackens, the rise in wages receives a check. The price of labour can therefore never raise itself except within limits which leave untouched the foundations of the capitalist system, and ensure its reproduction on an increasing scale. How could it be otherwise when the labourer exists only to increase other people's wealth which he himself has created?"* With all this con-

* Marx, "Capital," p. 273.

traction and expansion, inflation and depression, the increase of population has in practice little or nothing to do. It occurs in France as well as in England, in America as well as in Germany or Belgium.

Never, then, until the working classes shake themselves clear of the notion that a mere rise in wages is all they have to strive for, will they be able to dominate the causes of their own enslavement. Here and there better conditions of life may be obtained by combination, healthier houses, superior education, shorter hours of labour, more nourishing food, no labour for women and children. Such points as these may be gained just as slaves may be more kindly treated or more adequately fed in one country than in another; but that does not alter the foundation of the whole arrangement, which is that the wage-earning class is, under present social conditions, at the disposal of the machinery and the owners of the machinery and raw materials. The tendency of our system of production, and the increasing accumulation of capital, is of necessity to increase the amount of over-population relatively to the means of employment. And thus as we have seen in practice, an industrial army of reserve is maintained ever at the disposal of capital for the enhancement of profit, ready to be absorbed into the whirl of production during times of expansion, only to be thrown workless on to the streets in periods of collapse.

The increase of capital to a certain point is essential to the increase of power of production, but this stage once reached, the creation of a relative over-population becomes a definite means for the accumulation of wealth. During the periods of stagnation this industrial army of reserve presses on the army in active employment,

and serves to restrain its demands when the moment of over-production and great apparent prosperity at length comes. Capital increases in the hands of the few, because it has been taken completely out of the hands of the many. This arrangement whereby the over-population becomes a direct method for increasing wealth, and the increase of wealth and machinery tends to increase the over-population, is a see-saw quite peculiar to the capitalist system of production from its earliest growth, and is unknown under other conditions. The very excess of labour dragged from those who are employed, in order to raise the rate of surplus value taken from each worker, increases the numbers of the over-population, whilst the competition from without serves to keep down the rate of wages among the employed. Whilst some are over-worked to give extra profit, others are condemned to forced idleness who would gladly work were they permitted to do so. Thus, as a general result, the law by which an ever-increasing amount of wealth can be produced with an ever-lessening expenditure of human labour-force—this law which enables man, as a social being working in concert with others, to produce more and more wealth with less labour, is turned by our capitalist system, where the means of production are not at the disposal of the labourer, but the labourer is at the mercy of his means of production, directly to his disadvantage. As an immediate consequence, the more power and resources placed at the command of labour, and the greater the competition of the labourers, the more precarious becomes the position of the wage-earner, and his chances of selling his labour.*

But all this escapes notice, or is accounted for in slipshod fashion, because few of the educated classes care to examine

* Marx, "Capital," chapter xxv.

too closely into existing conditions. Spots on the sun, mental obliquity, chance, bad harvests—as if an ordered civilisation would not average its food supply over a long period of years—all have been put forward as the causes of the troubles we suffer from. To analyse the real causes of misery is to work for their removal, is to take the first steps towards a social overturn. The antagonism of classes which has hitherto been the history of all progress, is ever ignored by all but the clearest heads or most sympathetic natures of their time. That the poor shall never cease out of the land is thought by some a sufficient answer to all comments upon the infamous arrangements whereby the mass of the people are sunk in degradation in order that luxury and idleness may be maintained. But utility itself is relative, and the necessaries of life even depend upon the state of society or the position which each holds in that society. Why is more work devoted to this article than another? Because there is more demand. But the demand itself arises from the construction of society, that is, from needs and desires engendered by endless evolutions or by persistent education. Mere metaphysical or theological explanations fail utterly to account for the present or to forecast the future.

If we follow now such an analysis as this, its suggestiveness is surely at once apparent: "The consumption of products is determined by the social conditions in which the consumers find themselves placed, and these conditions themselves rest on the antagonism of classes. Cotton, potatoes, and spirits are articles of the commonest consumption. Potatoes have brought on scrofula; cotton has to a great extent displaced linen and wool, although wool and linen are, in many cases, of greater utility, if only on the ground of health; spirits, finally, have beaten beer and wine

out of the field in many places, although spirits when used as a food are generally admitted to be a poison. For an entire century the governments strove vainly against the European opium; economy gained the day, and gave the word of command to consumption.

"Why, then, are cotton, potatoes, and spirits the pivots of bourgeois society? Because less labour is needed to produce them, and they are consequently at the lowest price. Why does the minimum price decide the maximum consumption? Would it by chance be on account of the absolute utility of these articles, of their intrinsic utility, of their utility in so far as they correspond in the most useful manner to the needs of the workman as man, and not of man as workman? No; it is because in a society founded on *misery*, the most *miserable* products have the fatal prerogative of serving for the use of the greatest number.

"To say now that because the least costly things are most largely consumed they must be of the greatest utility, is to say that the wide consumption of gin on account of its small cost of production is conclusive proof of its utility; it is to tell the wage-earner that the potato is more wholesome for him than meat; it is to accept the existing state of things. In a society to come where the antagonism of classes would cease, where there would be no more classes, consumption would no longer be determined by the minimum time of production; but the time of production that would be devoted to an article would be determined by its degree of utility."*

Whatever, then, is the least costly in point of food, clothing, and housing, becomes a portion of the "standard of life," towards which the working classes tend under our

* Marx, "Misère de la Philosophie," pp. 41, 42.

great capitalist system; and though special causes may for a time prevent the minimum from being reduced to as low a level as is most conducive to the capitalist's view of utility, when once the tendency has resulted in actual fact, the standard is rarely raised again. Shoddy clothing, adulterated bread, poisonous gin are, as we can all see, the main supports of a large population in the great cities. It has been urged that a change might be brought about by influencing the nature of the demand for commodities, by inducing men and women to adopt greater simplicity of life, and thus by directing the work of the world in a better direction, to mitigate the injustice, and do away with the waste of labour which now prevails. But this is really a metaphysical view of the situation, and presumes a complete change in society itself, such as can only be the result of a great historical evolution or revolution in the methods of production, exchange, and education extending perhaps over generations, and ending in the final victory of the producing class, which will then be the entire community.*

Even while we are discussing the conditions around us, the historical movement, which, if neglected, renders all political economy utterly worthless, is pressing steadily onwards. The utopian socialists and reorganisers of society passed over the details of growth almost as lightly as the bourgeois economists. "The eagle eye of the idealist" saw the imperfections of the society of his own day, and could suggest a better form for the future, but the development proceeding from the past and going on relentlessly

* It is amusing to note that writers in the capitalist press call our shallow middle-class political economy, which does not even rightly lyse how the spoils of the workers are divided, a science. It is a ce in much the same sense that alchemy and astrology were ce.

through the present into the future, was too often hidden from even his gaze. The really scientific process takes account of the past and of the present, knowing right well that in this way alone is it possible to forecast, in any sound sense, the economy of the future. Those who desire to trace the origin and the effect of the machine industry must first grasp that antagonism of classes which has led irresistibly to our existing anarchy. Alike in agriculture and in manufacture, the constant improvements of machinery, the incalculable revolutions which may be wrought by new discoveries and inventions, render absolute plans or forecasts impossible. But this we can discern, that by great corporations, made up of many shareholders, who employ salaried officials to organise production or distribution; by the growing disposition of the State, even in its present bourgeois form, to take control of various departments also with a hierarchy of salaried officials, the old individualism, pure and simple, is being broken down, and collective in some degree substituted for individual effort. The revolt of the organised method of production, where each worker is more and more dependent on his fellow, against the anarchical system of exchange, where each is against all, becomes more pronounced with every successive crisis. The middle-class is incapable of handling its own social system, and the proletariat must at last come by its own. From the worse side of our existing civilisation a new and better form must be evolved, if any beneficial change takes place.

Thus, then, the examination of the existing conditions of capitalist production with the great machine industry, where wealth consists in a vast accumulation of commodities, and articles are produced with a view to their exchange for profit on the markets of the world, where also the

means of production, and the control of the exchange of products, are in the hands of one class, and nothing beyond bare subsistence is accorded to the other—this analysis, which takes account of the fierce competition that goes on among the capitalists for gain above, gradually crushing out the less powerful, and the yet fiercer competition among the wage-earners below, for the privilege of gaining an uncertain livelihood, gradually crushing the weaker there too—all proves clearly that the domination of capitalism must involve perpetual uncertainty and inferior production for profit, whilst the wealth created through improved machinery, instead of giving increased well-being to all, serves but to depress the mass of the people more and more relatively to the well-to-do.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE PERIOD OF APATHY.

WITH the collapse of the Chartist movement on the 10th April 1848, through the want of thorough education and combination among the working-classes, anything like organised resistance, on the part of the proletariat, to the domination of the landlords and middle-class came to an end.* Henceforth, the trifling changes brought about have been due rather to the unavoidable advance of society than to any special activity. Freedom of the press, freedom of speech and right of public meeting had been secured by the Chartists and their sympathisers; the right to combine had been partially conquered by the Trade Unionists; some of the more grievous evils of the factory system had been checked by the Ten Hours Bill; but no definite step had been taken towards the organisation of labour in the interest of the workers themselves, nor had any restriction been placed upon the power of the landowners and capitalists to avail themselves to the fullest extent of freedom of contract within the limits prescribed. Free-trade, as the abler thinkers on the side of the people had predicted would be the case, if that measure were carried

* Of course Chartism long survived this date, and many of its active supporters did admirable work in securing a really free press. But, as an effective revolutionary force, it died down after the meeting at Kennington.

without any compensating advantage for the workers, resulted only in increased profits for the capitalist class, and in securing for them more complete control over the entire field of production and exchange.

But how is it that our working countrymen have been induced thus to rest since 1848 in contented, or, at any rate, apparently contented subjection, though, relatively to the wealth being piled up around them, their condition was getting worse and worse every day? There must be some good reason for this strange quiescence when, continuously, from 1815 to 1848, there had been agitation, disturbance, and even bloodshed throughout the kingdom. The general explanation is that all grievances have been removed, that the working-classes have been too well off to complain, that education has softened their manners, that free-trade has increased their well-being, that the power to combine and write and speak freely has enabled them to bring sufficient pressure to bear, without resort to more threatening demonstrations.

There is of course some truth in such a statement, but it is by no means sufficient to account for the almost sudden stillness which fell upon the people. The real causes of the remarkable change are, however, not far to seek. First among them must be placed the great impetus given to emigration by the improvement and the cheapening of the passage across the Atlantic to America, and to our own colonies, as well as by the great gold discoveries in California and Australia. The period in England was one of serious depression; 1847 was the year of the third general industrial crisis, the first having taken place in 1825. Nothing could be more gloomy than the outlook at home. The Irish were already being hurried across the Atlantic by the hundreds

of thousands, under conditions which have rendered them and theirs our undying enemies; but with the gold discoveries in California, and the extraordinary change which was gradually wrought in American agriculture, a voluntary rush of English emigrants began as well. Attention was directed not only to California, but to the whole magnificent continent of North America. Such a new opening was precisely suited to men who having failed to secure at home that control over the forces of their own country to which they thought themselves entitled, could scarcely accept quietly the permanent establishment of the mean middle-class rule.

Accordingly the more energetic spirits of the rank and file, the very men who were, by disposition and training, the best calculated to keep alive in the minds of the people those ideas of political and social reconstruction which they had striven to put in practice, joined in the "rush" to the Pacific slope and the newly opened agricultural regions, as they then were of the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. The leaders of the democratic army were left, so to say, without either non-commissioned officers or veteran troops. Once away from England, in the free air of the Republic of the West, these English emigrants, unlike their Irish companions, too often forgot all about the degradation and misery they left behind them, threw themselves heart and soul into the great strife for individual gain which they found the ruling principle in the new country of their adoption, and have made what the Americans call "some of our best Colonists."

The impulse which the gold discoveries in California gave to trade may be easily traced. The general prosperity seemed even greater than it was. Instead of a dearth of precious metals, such as previously threatened, there

was now an adequate supply for all purposes. The increase of production of all kinds in the United States from this time forward was something marvellous, whilst England was naturally the country which provided the chief quantity of manufactured articles in response to the growing demand.

Barely, however, had mankind at large begun to understand the effect of the gold discoveries in California, first made known in 1847, than similar discoveries were announced in the English Colonies of Australia. This was in the middle of the year 1851. Another extraordinary rush followed to New South Wales and Victoria. It is interesting even now to read the records of these strange adventures of the modern Argonauts: ships left without crews, masters without servants, farmers without hands. All were absorbed in the one idea of mining for gold. Nor was this excitement merely temporary. From that date to the present the flow of English emigrants to the English-speaking settlements, whether in the United States or under our own flag, has been unceasing. Whenever an active energetic man has found himself shut out from all prospect of being politically useful or personally comfortable at home, he has sooner or later turned his attention to the great field open to him across the sea. The cleverest of our artisans, the finest of our labourers, the clearest-sighted of our working-class politicians have too many of them abandoned the apparently hopeless struggle against class inequality and class greed at home to seek a wider field in new countries where they could be sure for some years of obtaining a fair return for their labour if sober and industrious, and could besides look upon the growth of a young family as something better than a drag upon themselves now, and a grave probability of misery for [illegible]ildren in the future.

But the political and social effect of this emigration immediately after 1848 was greater even than it has been since. Those who left became, in the majority of cases, prosperous and wealthy, those who remained at home were assured of comparatively "good times" for a season. With good reason, therefore, could the capitalist class point to their great exhibition of 1851 with triumph. It was the celebration of bourgeois reaction in every country, the proclamation of the victory of the buy-cheap-and-sell-dear economy all the world over. All struggles, national or international, had been crushed by the brute force of the exploiting classes. Italy, Hungary, Ireland, Germany were once more under the heel of the oppressors. The French Republic, with Louis Napoleon as its President, was but the stepping-stone to that empire of stock-jobbers and prostitutes more degrading and injurious to the French people than even the direct bourgeois rule which preceded and followed it. The danger to the fabric of class domination was over-past for the time, and capitalist tyranny was fairly riveted again upon the necks of the people.

The stoutest opponents of the whole system throughout Europe were seeking refuge, like our own people, in America, and were becoming, in spite of themselves, the means of widening the gulf between the wealth of the few and the poverty of the many in the "old home," by the demand for goods which their wants occasioned, and the enormous profits which the new markets they provided secured for the capitalist class. Unquestionably, therefore, the gold dis-

the great increase of emigration consequent

overies, was the main cause of the change in

he working class in England towards their



social and political masters immediately after the great series of agitations and risings which lasted from 1835 to 1848. A few figures will show this very clearly. In 1846 the total emigration from Great Britain and Ireland was 129,851, in 1847 this had increased to 258,270, in 1848 the numbers were 248,089. For the six years from 1848, the following were the figures:—in 1849, 299,498; in 1850, 280,849; in 1851, 335,996; in 1852, 368,764; in 1853, 329,937; in 1854, 323,429; two thirds of this emigration being from England, and the majority of the number adult males of English birth. A great outlet had in fact been found for, the disaffected and adventurous, which they were not slow to take advantage of. The Cromwells and the Hampdens of the Chartist movement were rather helped than hindered in their resolution to try their fortune in new countries.

This great exodus has, however, rarely been considered from the political point of view. It certainly came most unexpectedly to the aid of the possessing classes, and completely falsified the predictions of even the most acute thinkers as to the immediate recurrence of a dangerous class struggle. For not only did the active workers leave continuously, but the men who had "made their pile" in other regions frequently returned to European countries with their accumulations, and thus strengthened, especially in England, the capitalist hierarchy to which they now naturally belonged. Historians have partially pointed out what a serious effect the emigration to the New World and the vast inflow of precious metals had upon the greatness and development of Spain, how the most energetic of the rising generations hurried off to Peru, Mexico, and Cuba, whilst the riches which were poured into the hands of the king and the Church, enabled them to enter upon danger-

ous policies abroad at the same time that all movement at home was rendered hopeless. The great emigration from Europe since 1847, and the development of the virgin resources of America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, &c., answers in some sort to that marvellous expansion of trade in the sixteenth century.

Until within the last few years, when the Irish in America have begun to work for the political enfranchisement of their people in Ireland itself, the influence of the emigration upon Europe and England has been not dissimilar from that of the old emigration upon Spain. The great international banking, funding, loan-mongering, capitalist combination, took a wider and ever wider extension. Men who might have been of the greatest service in nobler fields, were drawn into the whirl of production for gain. England, the country in which the most serious social movement had begun—where political economy had first been studied, where Robert Owen had laid the foundations of true education, and the working-classes had organised alike the first peaceful, and the first forcible movement as a class against the capitalist tyranny, became wholly dead to all revolutionary propaganda; and the middle-class could absolutely insult the English workers by flattering them with being content, as mere machines, to give forth profit, whilst "wild continental theorists" were urging them to rise against such economical oppression.*

Thus it is clear to me that the gold discoveries, the increased emigration which they at once fostered, and the

* Moreover, at this time, the middle-class bribed many of the Chartists who remained by posts in this or that of urn against the c of the people. This system has been egularly u present day.

great improvement in steam shipping which still further accelerated the exodus, together with the immense wealth created by those who thus devoted their labour to development of virgin resources—the great movement of population, in short, which began about 1848, was the main reason why, when the revolutionary wave of that period quieted down, it did not rise again, in spite of the continuance and even the greater intensity of economical pressure. The United States and Australia were the safety-valves which allowed the capitalist machine to be driven at a higher speed than ever, without immediate danger to those who handled it.

In addition to this, however, we must consider that at this time the full effect of our vast railway system, which in 1847 had led to a more than ordinarily severe crisis owing to the excessive amount of capital which had been invested in this direction and the inordinate speculation which grew up around the whole business, had begun to be felt in our home trade, and pushed the whole industrial population into ever increasing activity. England, too, had the advantage of being first in the field with improved machinery, and the cheap concentrated labour of our great towns. We had the start in every direction, and England became more than ever the workshop of the world. The purchasing power of wages increased more rapidly than competition among the labourers, and thus rendered them for the time more satisfied with their lot. Free-trade, of course, helped on the development by reducing the cost of raw material to the manufacturer, and of the necessaries of life to the workers; but it was only one, and by no means the chief, cause of the gre ward bound in the accumulation of v All duti strictions were re moved

from the importation of food until 1867; but in the twenty years between 1846 the imports of corn mounted from 16,000,000 cwt. before 1846, to 66,789,024 cwt. in 1867, an amount which has since doubled; so that England is now dependent for fully two-thirds of her food, as she was before for the raw material of her manufactures, upon foreign countries.

More complete figures show the increasing dependence more clearly. During the nine years from 1840-48 the average total import yearly was 18,500,000 cwt.; from 1849-1869, the average import yearly was 50,000,000 cwt.; from 1870-1881, the average import yearly was 110,000,000 cwt. No doubt this importation prevented great pressure from arising during periods of bad harvests, such as we have recently experienced, by a sudden increase of the price of the necessaries of life in comparison with the rate of wages—a rate which all experience in this country and abroad, shows that the workers cannot even by the most complete combinations suddenly change. But although this free import has prevented serious evils to the workers and consequent troubles and risings, such as occurred at other periods of bad seasons, it has in no sense interfered with the general law that wages under existing conditions tend towards the starvation level, nor with the vast increase of our manufacturing industries which has resulted in such a concentration of our town population that almost unheard-of misery exists side by side with enormous wealth. Meanwhile the imports of raw materials were growing still more rapidly. The quantity of raw cotton imported, allowance
'r re-export, which had been 400,000,000 lbs.
1847, increased to 1,140,000,000 lbs. in
development seems almost incredible within

so short a time; but at this period the Indian market may be said to have been completely conquered, whilst European countries and America had not yet begun to manufacture for themselves upon a large scale.*

Then came the collapse, owing to the war between the North and South in the United States; but the truth was, that the production had been overdone before. In their anxiety to find a market, the Lancashire manufacturers had produced to excess. From 1860 came a period of depression which, during the years 1862-66, reached the point of absolute starvation. India was used to fill up the void caused by the American falling-off, and the factory hands suffered in patience from the misery which the loss of employment occasioned. When, however, emigration was proposed as a remedy for the evil, when philanthropic men

* Mr Henry Ashworth, quoted by Mr Hoyle in "Our National Resources," p. 22, gives the following table of the increase of the value of land in Lancashire in 1692 and 1865.

REAL PROPERTY ASSESSED FOR LAND-TAX IN LANCASHIRE AT TWO PERIODS.

	Annual Value, 1692.	Annual Value, 1865.	Increase of Value.	Rate of Increase, per cent.
	£	£	£	
Hundred of Leyland, .	5,774	249,284	243,510	or 4,317
„ Lonsdale, .	8,500	423,967	415,467	„ 4,987
„ Amounderness,	10,288	526,239	515,951	„ 5,115
„ Blackburn, .	11,131	950,916	939,785	„ 8,542
„ Salford, . .	25,907	4,084,888	4,058,931	„ 15,767
„ West Derby, .	35,642	3,801,585	3,765,943	„ 10,666
	97,242	10,036,879	9,939,637	

It is a pity Mr Ashworth did not give the rate of his own profits and those of his brother capitali[illegible]ay only from 1832 to 1865, at the same time.

desired that Government should assist those who were pining in misery in Lancashire to regions where they might take themselves out of the wage-earning class for life, the Lancashire manufacturers most vigorously protested against this course. They wanted the "hands," they said, upon the return of trade. What would they do if the only means whereby they could make their capital fructify were to be taken from them. Throughout the whole of the dispute they argued as if they had some vested interest in the people, who could want nothing better than to act as fuel for capital, and to provide surplus value, in accordance with middle-class economy, for their masters. Unluckily, all the officials took the capitalist view. Emigration was far from being a permanent remedy for the mischief, but it was monstrous, indeed, that scarcely any steps should have been taken in this direction, merely in order that the masters might not be deprived of their wage-slaves on the return of brisk trade. Worse than this, however, the employers frequently ran their mills full time for a short period rather than half-time for a longer, because in this way they made greater profit out of the hands they employed, though other men had to stand idle all the day. The people themselves seemed to have lost all pluck. Middle-class rule, and middle-class economy had led them to believe that they were born only to labour, that, no matter how much wealth they might create, they themselves should rest satisfied with their daily or weekly wage. They had absolutely been led, many of them, to believe that over-population was the real difficulty they had to contend with,

such typical capitalists as Mr Cobden and Mr

re the friends of the working-classes, instead of

est, because most hypocritical and insidious

enemies. That the Lancashire lads should have submitted without a murmur to the misery they endured during the great cotton famine, when they themselves could look round upon the wealth which they had created, and the lands they had been robbed of, is surely a sufficient answer to those who contend that mere hunger and oppression must of themselves engender insurrection.

Not until 1870 did the cotton industry return to the same activity which it had attained in 1859-60. Thenceforward, the amount of raw material imported has remained nearly stationary at 1,400,000,000 lbs., though the years 1877 and 1878 fell almost to the level of 1860.

Almost the same expansion may be noted in other branches, the import of raw wool having trebled between 1843 and 1881, whilst coal, iron, and other industries have developed in to the full as great a proportion. We have but to look around us, in fact, to note the changes which have taken place. The contrast between what was and what is can barely be expressed in plain words. On every side the accumulation of wealth and its effects, in the increasing luxury and uselessness of large portions of the population may be observed, the growth of great lounger-towns such as Brighton, Cheltenham, Scarborough, Eastbourne, Torquay, &c., where no production whatever goes on in an economical sense, the vast additions to the palaces at the west end of London, and similar erections in other cities, bear witness to the fact that the classes which live upon the labour of their own countrymen, or upon the wealth derived from impoverished India are constantly acquiring greater strength. This growth of the lounger-towns is in itself a most remarkable phenomenon. A comparison of the population of such

towns census by census shows at once what a development has taken place in this direction; and here, at any rate, there can be no pretence that the wealthy inhabitants of these cities of pleasure "organise" labour, and thus are entitled to large remuneration. Those who thus live at ease upon their incomes, and maintain a useless fringe of hangers-on to live upon differences of value, or to administer to luxury, are simply pensioners upon labour, who seize the wealth of the producers under the laws made by the possessing class, whilst thousands or millions exist on starvation wages.

The mere returns of income alone above £150 a year show the extraordinary amassing of wealth which has gone on since 1848. Thus in 1848 the total annual value assessed to income-tax in Great Britain,* Ireland being excluded, was £256,000,000 in 1882 the total annual value was actually £578,000,000 showing an increase of at least £300,000,000 in the thirty-five years. Yet all know that the returns to income-tax are immensely understated, and that in all probability the amount if properly returned would reach close upon £700,000,000. The population of Great Britain has increased from 20,000,000 to 30,000,000 in the meantime. Thus even at the rate given by the owners of incomes admitted to be above £150 a year, the wealth of the non-producing classes as represented only by annual returns and without considering the vast amounts on which no tax for income can be claimed, or estimating the false returns in any way, has increased more than two fold since 1848, whilst the population has increased only one-half. It is amazing in the face of these

* This is really an unfair comparison, seeing that the limit of taxation has been greatly raised since 1865.

figures that some partisans of the discredited school of Malthus should still be found to declare that it is to "over-population" that we must attribute the fearful contrasts which lie around us. But an estimate of the total income at the two periods taken for contrast is still more instructive. In 1848 the entire income of the United Kingdom was put at £520,000,000, in 1882 the total income was estimated at close on £1,300,000,000.* Here then was an increase of two-and-a-half times, and although such estimates are really very difficult to frame accurately, the above tallies closely enough with the official income-tax returns to render it probable that they are very nearly correct. Nor for the purpose we have in view does an assumed fall in the value of the precious metals make much difference in the calculation. For according to the same authority the actual producers by labour who received in wages £278,000,000 out of a total estimated income of £520,000,000 in 1848, receive no more than, at the outside, £338,000,000 out of a total income of £1,300,000,000 in 1882, much of which they pay back again to the possessing class. Thus then whereas in 1848 the landlords, the capitalists, and the middle class absorbed less than one-half of the total income, in 1882 thirty-four years later they took just three-fourths of such income.† Mr Mulhall

* Robert Giffen.

† According to Mr Robert Giffen's calculations, the following are the total amounts of wealth in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland at the respective dates. Mr Giffen it is well to state is the head of the Statistical Department of the Board of Trade. The totals are in round figures.

1814	£2,300,000,000
1865	£6,100,000,000
1875	£8,500,000,000

Let any worker or thi[illegible]ider these figures, and bearing in

estimates further that 222,500 families absolutely possess property to the value of £5,728,000,000, while 4,629,000 families possess together only £398,000,000 at the outside. The same authority estimates the total wealth in 1882 at £8,750,000,000.

Here, then, is a conclusive answer to those who contend that the working-classes share our vast development of wealth. They do nothing of the kind.

It may be added here that in addition to the profit made out of their own countrymen, it is calculated that the capitalist class receive from £65,000,000 to £80,000,000 a year as a return for their investments made abroad. Thus the working-classes are more and more divided from the classes who live upon their labour, whilst the increasing amount of capital needed to enable a man to begin to produce on his own account, renders it impossible for any worker who is not born with a complete genius for "acquisition," to rise out of his own class into the class of the oppressors. So far from reduction of taxation upon imports having raised the workers relatively to the wealthy, this very measure has depressed them, in comparison,

mind that between 1865 and 1875 a greater addition was made to the wealth of the country than the total amount of wealth existing in 1814, let him further reflect on the condition of the working classes, as set forth in the Blue Books and Reports of Factory Inspectors for 1875. Arthur Young's estimates of population and production in the latter half of the last century are worth giving for the sake of comparison. Total population 9,000,000. Dependent on agriculture (less landlords, clergy and poor) 2,800,000. Capital value of land £536,000,000. Capital value of houses £100,000,000. Farmers' [illegible]0,000. Rent £16,000,000. Rent of houses £5,000,000. soil in husbandry," not including woods and forests, "Expenditure of husbandry," including rent and 0. Farmers' profit £18,237,691. Labourers' wages

more than they were before. Still clearer proof of this will be given in the next chapter, but in 1863, seventeen years after the Repeal of the Corn Laws, Mr Gladstone said, in introducing the Budget for that year :—

"It is one of the most melancholy features in the social state of the country, that while there is a decrease in the consuming power of the people, and an increase in the privations and distress of the labouring class and operatives, there is at the same time a constant accumulation of wealth in the upper classes, and a constant increase of capital." *

It is indeed generally allowed that nothing could well be worse than the position of the people in our great cities, and of large portions of our agricultural population side by side with unheard-of wealth.

The popular movements during this period have been of the feeblest description, owing to the circumstances narrated. It is true that the ballot has become the law for elections—a measure which was a portion of a high Tory programme a century ago—and in 1867 a Conservative cabinet carried household suffrage for the towns, after a certain amount of popular agitation, and for fear that their political rivals might get the better of them if they declined to take the matter in hand themselves; true, also, that progress has been made in some directions in protecting the workers against the oppression of employers, and in public instruction; but in the main no great changes have taken place in the distribution of power or in the organisation of produc-

* I had intended to insert here the statistics of the various occupations of the people in 1861, 1871 and 1881, showing the decrease of the rural population and the increasing employment of women in industry. But the census for 1881 is not available yet (October 1883)!

tion. The progress has been simply of a character which on the whole suited the views of the capitalist class, subject to the absolutely necessary yielding to the pressure brought to bear by the workers and the less selfish of the professional classes, who have made common cause with them. By still maintaining an inordinate cost for political elections, and refusing to charge the expenses on the rates or the public revenue, by still insisting on gratuitous service from Members of Parliament, the working-classes, even where they have roused themselves from their apathy and indifference, have been forced to return to the so-called popular chamber members whose interests are directly opposed to those of the labourers, and who, on any real knife-and-fork question, would resolutely vote against measures for the welfare of the great majority, on the ground that the principles of political economy, manufactured for their advantage, would be outraged if this or that change were made for the benefit of the many.

An analysis of the House of Commons shows at once how completely it is still in the hands of the owners of the means of production and their hangers-on. The only marvel is that such an assembly should ever have brought itself to carry any popular measures whatever. The aristocrats are directly or indirectly represented by 272 members; the landed interests are represented by 267 members; there are 122 lawyers who live upon the complications of the laws they themselves pass; 18 members of great influence represent the drink interest; 25 members speak for the bankers; 113 hang together on all matters which

lients, the railway shareholders; 155 are

merchants.* Out of the total of 658

Reform Almanack," 1883, p. 55. This publication

members, but two in any sense represent those who provide the wealth which the other portions of the community use and enjoy, and even these two have, on more than one occasion, deliberately betrayed the interests of their own class. To, talk, therefore, of progress in any wide sense between 1848 and 1883 is almost ridiculous. Capital still controls all legislation, though pressure from without may force on a few minor reforms. Since 1867 as since 1832 middle-class rule has had it all its own way. A Reform Bill means little when all the political forces are in the hands of the possessing class, when the press of the country is almost entirely in their hands, and when, as before said, it is cheap and easy to bribe some of the active intelligent men who too often are obliged by the consideration of maintaining their wife and family outside the workhouse, to accept help from the natural enemies of their own class.

The truth is that Constitutional Government and Representation of the People, as at present organised, are in the strictest sense middle-class institutions, arising out of the same conditions which give the middle-class predominance in the field of production. The fictitious freedom of contract which serves so well to disguise practical slavery in the economical struggle is translated into a fictitious freedom of speech and freedom of election in the political struggle, though in existing arrangements such freedom means in both cases only the right to change the name of the master or of the representative, leaving the real compulsion all the while as oppressive as if liberty were unknown. Forms of Government, in short, matter

is issued entirely in the interests of capitalists and against the workers; but it contains figures which are useful as showing the unblushing robbery which goes on in every direction under middle-class rule.

not at all to the mass of our workers, so long as they are prevented from organising their own labour; and elections as at present conducted simply mean that a portion of the wage-slave class have the privilege of sanctioning the system by which they and their fellows are enslaved.

Our external policy has been conducted on the same lines as our domestic. We welcomed Louis Napoleon as an ally with open arms because his despotism, begun in fraud and treachery and established on cold-blooded massacre, secured for the trading classes of France that "order" which enabled them to keep down the workers and repress their ideas. Men professed a regard for oppressed nationalities just in so far as their enfranchisement might strengthen the bourgeoisie. The moment the proletariat showed any signs of fighting for their own hand our own middle-class at once took alarm. The Crimean War and the Mutiny in India scarcely ruffled the stream of placid contentment at home. In Turkey, after the peace of 1856, our financiers found another field for the practice of their familiar chicanery; whilst Russia herself was forced by the pressure of defeat, or the supposed necessity for immediate construction of railroads, to become tributary to our loan-mongers. India since 1857 has fallen under the same control; and capital draining from the country yearly enormous sums for the benefit of the wealthy, has aggravated dearth and famine to a pitch unknown in all the long history of Hindostan. Everything has been turned to the account of English capital, which draws its return from all quarters of the globe. Liebig called England the vampire of the nations, for he saw the inevitable effect upon
diate future of a system which forced foreign
exhaust alike their soil and their inhabitants by

paying heavy tribute for loans to the capitalist class of Great Britain. But hitherto our own leading thinkers have congratulated the country upon all this, as if the ravening greed for gain which neglects all real scientific organization of labour at home or abroad, and enriches the few in the present at the expense of permanent injury to the many now and in the future were the sole object of human life.

Although, however, capital has thus gained power, and great social and political movements have almost died down since 1848, in one quarter so much progress has been made that now what was in some degree advantageous to the people at large is becoming harmful to the general interest. I refer to the Trade Unions and the right of combination which they have at length conquered from the exploiting classes.* The right of combination was conceded, as stated, in 1824, but it was subject to a number of restrictions which, when enforced, still placed the workers at the mercy of the masters in many respects. It was a conspiracy to combine to the injury of third parties. It was a conspiracy to combine to affect the wages of people not present at the meeting of the workers interested, "in fact, there was scarcely an act performed by any workman as a member of a trade-union which was not an act of conspiracy and misdemeanour."† The case of the six Dorchester labourers, one of the most infamous cases of tyranny in all the long record of class oppression, shows that there clauses of the Act were not allowed to remain a dead letter. These men were actually convicted and sentenced to seven years'

* It is worthy of note that Robert Owen presided at the first organised Congress of Trade Unions.

† Howell, p. 1, 34.

transportation for the crime of combination. But this was in the days prior to 1848. The spirit of resistance to middle-class oppression was still alive among the people. A public meeting of 400,000 persons was held in London. A procession of nearly 50,000 working men attended on Lord Melbourne to present an enormous petition on behalf of these six men. The Whigs and their capitalist allies resisted as long as they dared, but at last the men were pardoned. Pardoned; but they had been hurried out of the country and sold for slaves in New South Wales at £1 a-head. No notice was ever sent to them of their reprieve, and none of them heard of it for years. Such is English justice when the law is handled by a class.

It was from this unbearable tyranny that the trade-unionists had to free themselves. In 1848 a serious prosecution was instituted against twenty-one masons for conspiracy under the Act of 6 George IV. A prolonged agitation followed, which resulted in the discharge of the workmen on appeal, though heavy costs were incurred. It is upon these heavy costs the capitalist class rely, to break down the resistance of the workers in all cases, and similar cases at Sheffield, where the sentence of the men accused of combination to ten years penal servitude was reversed on appeal proved specially expensive. No damages be it remembered were ever given to the workers for false imprisonment, nor were the hardships to which they were put in the least considered. It was the "law" enacted and enforced by the class hostile to the labourers, but the law which they must submit to nevertheless though wholly unrepresented.

The costs of some of these prosecutions to the Unions are worth noting, three such cases at Newton, Sheffield

and Wolverhampton, absolutely costing in all no less than £7,658 9s. 0d.* This was indeed, as the workmen said, persecution not prosecution under the shameful law of conspiracy then existing, and a definite agitation now began for the repeal of the Act itself under which such infamous injustice could be done. The great strikes at Preston from 1853 to 1854, and the Wolverhampton strike 1855, above all the great builders' strike and lock-out in London in 1859, kept public attention constantly fixed on those disputes. The strike of 1859 resulted in the condemnation of one man to two months imprisonment for picketing, and from this time forward the agitation for the repeal of this oppressive law was continuous and thoroughly organised. The trade-unionists demanded an entire repeal of the combination laws, not merely their modification or mitigation, as well as the final abandonment of all prosecutions for conspiracy arising from labour disputes.

I will here quote Mr George Howell, who, having done good service in his day, has now unfortunately thrown in his lot with the very capitalist class he began by resisting. The capitalist "press as usual met these demands by reviving all the old stories about trade-union tyranny and oppression; instances of intimidation and outrage were raked up from the blue-books of the past; sometimes the picture was coloured by pure inventions for the sake of effect; the unions were denounced as secret societies, whose power was sustained only by the terrorism which they exercise over the minds of the more timid and ignorant of the workmen."† But the result was not what the opponents of the Trade Unions hoped. Even the horrible outrages at Sheffield in 1866, which created so great a

* Howell, p. 141. † Ibid., p. 143.

sensation throughout the country, and were identified with the name of Broadhead did not overshadow the important truth which lay below—that the only hope of the workers is in combination, and that to refuse such right to combine means injustice, which must sooner or later lead to graver conspiracy and violence.* What, however, is not even yet fully admitted is, that all combination is based in the long run upon force and fear of punishment. This may be very objectionable to state in so many words, but it is a portion of the human nature of the upper and middle classes as well as of the workers. Publicity and freedom undoubtedly tend to lessen the likelihood of such appeals to force as showing more and more conclusively on which side the real strength lies. Yet in the long run members of any class association know well that the only real basis of authority is the power of compelling obedience, either by social or other force, to the rules framed by the majority.

The result of the Royal Commission in 1867 was, however, the Trade Union Act of 1871, and at last after a further vigorous and persistent agitation carried on in every shape, the Trade Unions gained the full repeal of the penal laws affecting labour combinations. This was not, however,

* I must here record my sincere admiration for the noble conduct of the band of Positivists, Dr Congreve, Professor Beesly, Mr Frederick Harrison, Dr Bridges, Mr Henry Crompton, and others, who stood forward to champion the rights of the workers of Great Britain when the whole capitalist press was denouncing the Trade Unionists, and when many who now court the Trade Union leaders refused to say a word in their defence. Such men deserve, and I hope will receive, the personal thanks of the lovers of freedom in every country. I say this myself with the less reserve that I am entirely opposed to the Positivist theories, historical, social, economical, and hierarchical; but I trust the day will never come when Englishmen will cease to acknowledge, or be afraid to declare their admiration for, the chivalry and self-sacrifice of honourable adversaries.

until the year 1875. Thus, in spite of the growing numbers of the Trade Unions and, since 1867, the increasing voting power of the working-classes in the great cities, it took fifty years, from the first act of justice in 1825, to bring about the more complete measure of 1875, just as it required fifty years from the first small measure in restriction of excessive overwork of children in 1802 to ensure the final acceptance of the Ten Hours' Bill of 1847 in 1852. Slowly indeed do social reforms come about when the class which calls for them is shut out from all real power in the State.

Of the organisation of the Trade Unions or their principal objects, there is no need to speak at length. The good which they have wrought for the working-classes at large, and not merely for their own body, is to be found in many statutes which regulate the relations between employers and employed, in the arrangement of a regular day's labour with extra payment for overtime; in the forcing upon the employers, after many a long year's struggle, that liability for accident which will doubtless soon be made compulsory. In all these matters the Trade Unions have done great service, and there can be no doubt that had not their organisation existed, even such reforms as were obtained in this direction might have been longer delayed. The Trade Unions were, in the first instance, voluntary associations descending, as we have seen, from the old craft-guilds, and directly interested in maintaining a demand for a higher rate of wages or in resisting a reduction; they have been useful too in diminishing the hours of labour, and in regulating all matters of employment and discharge. Incidentally, they find men places who are thrown out of work, and keep men on strike when a strike or a lock-out is determined upon. Strikes are, of course, industrial warfare, and are decided

upon by the majority of the members of a union. That they do at times secure for the workmen a higher rate of wages earlier than they could obtain such enhanced rate, unless the employers knew that this appeal to arms, as it were, lay in the background, cannot be doubted; nor that reduction of wages is sometimes delayed on the same account; but after all, this desultory sort of struggle does not benefit the class of workers as a whole.*

Powerful as the Trade Unions have been, and, indeed, to a certain extent still are, Trade Unionists are, all told, but a small fraction of the total working population.† They constitute, in fact, an aristocracy of labour who, in view of the bitter struggle now drawing nearer and nearer, cannot be said to be other than a hindrance to that complete organisation of the proletariat which alone can obtain for the workers their proper control over their own labour. The unfortunate sense of superiority which now can be detected, already made itself felt in the Chartist movement. The men who earned thirty shillings or thirty-five shillings a week looked down upon the struggles of the less fortunate who earned but fifteen shillings or twelve

* Strikes are the insurrections of labour. Like insurrections in the political body, they are a purely destructive agency. There is no creative or healing virtue in them. Yet, as an insurrection may destroy political institutions which have outlived their usefulness, and have become senseless and then pernicious, thus clearing the way for an after-work of harmonious construction, so a strike may have the effect to break up a crust of custom which has formed over the remuneration of a class of labourers, or to break through a combination of employers to withstand an advance of wages where the isolated efforts of the individuals of the wages class acting with imperfect knowledge, and under a fear of personal proscription would be wholly inadequate to accomplish those objects.—Francis A. Walker. Walker is a bourgeois economist, but he has more sympathy with the worker than most of his fellows.

† At most, 600,000 out of a total of 8,000,000.

shillings. Well off themselves, they too often despise their fellows, and consider an underpaid unskilled labourer as an inferior. It is this which constitutes the danger of Trade Unionism at the present time to the interests of the mass of the workers. Being also fundamentally unsectarian and unpolitical, they prevent any organised attempt being made by the workers as a class to form a definite party of their own, apart from existing factions, with a view to dominate the social conditions—a victory which, of course, can only be peaceably gained by resolute political action. Moreover, as matters stand, the secretaries of the Trade Unions or of the special committees appointed, by no means keep aloof themselves from political action, but unfortunately use the influence they obtain by their position in aid of this or that section of the capitalist class—a course diametrically opposed to the interests of the workers, who should of necessity refrain from all common action with capitalists, unless in matters where the latter surrender at discretion rather than run the danger of complete defeat.

Similar drawbacks have been noted in the temporarily successful union of the agricultural labourers. This, the first really organised attempt of the down-trodden rural serf —the slave of the so-called "country" party—to reassert himself in modern times was, in every particular, worthy of respect and support. The fury of the farmers when they found their mere hinds proclaiming the right to combine and fix wages, quite equalled the anger of Mr John Bright and his fellow-manufacturers when their "hands" dared to strike against the beneficent capitalist rule; though it is true the farmers' denunciations were expressed in less eloquent language than the Lancashire cotton-lords could command. But the union of the agricultural labourers,

admirably calculated as it was to raise the tone and develop the independence of the hired farm-servant, has produced, so far, little serious economical effect. Many of the most active of the original agitators have emigrated; the prolonged depression in agriculture has reacted upon the labourers; the Liberal capitalists have used this or that "leader" for party purposes, or have traded upon religious sectarian feeling until it has become quite clear that in this direction also, nothing can be hoped from isolated action. Even the paltry measure of assimilation of borough and county suffrage, which would enfranchise the labourers, has been pushed off by party exigencies, until a wider measure will be needed to rouse any real enthusiasm among the mass of the people for any electoral reform.

Nevertheless the formation of an Agricultural Labourers' Union, and the struggles to which it gave rise, the growth of independent thought among the younger men in relation to their surroundings which it necessarily engendered, the idea roused among them that in combination lay safety whilst isolation meant defeat and oppression, above all the question asked more and more frequently, Who ought to own the land?—These various causes have made the agricultural labourer of to-day a very different man from his immediate predecessor, depressed and miserable though his condition still is. Trade unions, however, whether in town or country, must lead to wider and more powerful combinations of the working classes if they are to raise the proletariat of Great Britain from their present degraded state. Those very jealousies between trades or portions of trades, as well as between the Unionist officials themselves, throw back the movement, whilst the mere existence of an aristocracy of labour tends to disguise the economical pressure under

which all suffer. Trade unions have done good work in the past; so far as they defend their own people from oppression and maintain a higher standard of life they are doing good work to-day; but by holding aloof from the political struggle, and by refusing to strive for the control of the machinery of production in concert with their fellows they keep back the advance of their own class as a class and prepare even for their own members a sad future in view of the constant changes which are going on in every branch of human industry.

When the capitalist press congratulates the Trade Unionists on the "moderation" of their Conferences, and the capitalist class themselves are good enough to express themselves as "quite gratified" with the attitude of the two Trade Union members of Parliament, anyone who understands the real antagonism which exists and must ever exist between the class which provides and the class which trades upon force of labour, can clearly see that the men who pretend to fight the battle of the workers are—possibly with the best intentions—betraying them. The acceptance by working-class leaders of the position of Factory Inspectors under the existing law and subject to capitalist regulation is but another form of insidious bribery similar to that which may be traced in many other directions. How can a workman refuse to take a place at a few hundreds a year when, having become a Secretary of his Union for years, he has probably lost his aptitude for work, and, moreover, considers himself entitled and qualified to protect the interests of his class in the service of the State? It is natural that he should take the bait, but in this way he enrols himself as a member of the dominant class, and becomes thenceforward opposed to that uncompro-

mising revolutionary work which is absolutely necessary to enfranchise his fellows.

But the waste of Trades Union funds on strikes or petty benefits to the individuals who compose them is still more deplorable. Enormous sums have been spent or lost, directly, or indirectly, in consequence of strikes which, if applied by the Unionists to an active propaganda against the existing system, whereby a class is permitted to crush them under the pretence of scientific economy, would long since have produced a serious effect. Even the return of working-class members to Parliament, as in Germany, with a definite mandate from their fellows to uphold the claims of those who produce all wealth and live in comparative misery, would have gained the Unionists far more than they have secured by mere strikes. Twenty working-class members even in our present ill-chosen middle-class House with a thorough determination to force the economical and social oppression of their fellows upon the attention of the remaining 638 pensioners upon labour around them would soon, if thoroughly supported out of doors, change the whole course of legislation. And to bring this about would be a slight strain upon the workers compared with what unsuccessful strikes have often cost them. It is in this direction, at any rate, that we must look for any complete reform. The producing classes themselves must work out their own enfranchisement from the tyranny they suffer from. Our present suffrage, though still far from what it ought to be, gives far greater power to the workers than they have ever used to forcé forward their own claims.

Even during this long period of apathy, however, we can see the irresistible tendency of the time. The interference of the State in sanitary matters, which, if the law were

fully observed, would be very stringent indeed: the rules with respect to adulteration and the appointment of public analysts; the interference with shipping so as to prevent the monstrous overloading which used to go on leading to the loss of thousands of seamen's lives; the Employers' Liability Bill, already referred to; the Nine Hours' Bill of 1874, which raised such a storm of indignation among the straiter sect of pharisaical economists; the Education Act of 1870—all these measures, and others which will occur to the reader, prove, beyond a doubt, that the illusory personal freedom is being gradually checked in the interest of collective freedom and in spite of all bourgeois theories.* That this tendency has here and there been turned to account by fad-mongers is undoubted, but we have yet to see what will be the result when the people have full voting powers and are fairly represented. Labourers are not usually addicted to political or social fads. In any case it

* The first volume of Louis Blanc's "History of the French Revolution," contains a really beautiful summary of the long struggle between the ideas of collectivism and individualism. Though the antagonism of classes, and the necessity of the ultimate triumph of the proletariat is not brought out with the scientific accuracy of the German school of Marx and Engels, the charm of the style and the religious sentiment of the writer attract many whom the more rigid methods and more involved style of the Germans would repel. In the same way the great success of Mr Henry George's work, "Progress and Poverty," is due not to its economical principles, which are fundamentally unsound, but to its easy, flowing periods, and to the noble moral tone which pervades the whole. It is difficult to over-estimate the enormous value of Mr Henry George's book as the forerunner of organised socialism among the English-speaking peoples. Written from the middle-class standpoint, it has done more to clear away middle-class prejudice than any direct socialist volume could possibly have effected; even the proletariat, governed as they are by the ideas of their oppressors, were not prepared to learn the truth all at once. Mr Henry George has, in fact, led the way to an intellectual revolution far more complete perhaps than he himself thought at the time.



seems almost certain that apathy is at last developing into agitation and movement, and those statesmen, economists and jurists who fail to take account of the truth that all progress depends in existing conditions on class antagonism are likely to be seriously awakened to the fact as regards their own society in the immediate future.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAND AND THE LABOURERS.

It is now generally admitted, alike by historians, jurists, antiquarians, and economists, that the earliest form of ownership and cultivation of land was that in which a certain district of greater or less extent was held as the property of a tribe in common. Traces of the existence of such societies are to be found in all parts of the world. The Russian mir, the village communities of Eastern Europe and India, are but survivals of ownership of land in common, such as formerly prevailed in England, and in every other civilised country, where common property in land has almost entirely disappeared. From this tribal ownership private property was gradually established, chiefly owing to the effect of war and exchange; for war gave supremacy to certain families, and exchange, though at first a communal business, soon helped to give power to the stronger or more dexterous. The tribal ownership once partially shaken, property in land became vested, to some extent, in the family, and the produce was, of course, common, so far as the members of each family were concerned; but a large portion of the soil was still at the disposal of the community in general for purposes of pasture. Slavery, no matter how introduced into different communities, tended to strengthen private ownership and to increase the inequality of conditions among the tribe or nati[illegible] Thus, in the slow evolution of

thousands of years, our present views with regard to landed property as a private concern were established.

The internal history of Rome is little more than a record of the bitter struggle in relation to landed property, and the development of private ownership; and the rules by which such ownership has been governed in modern Europe are based upon the Roman law. The great slave-cultivated estates which, under the control of the powerful Roman landowners and capitalists, gradually devoured the common land and, by degrees, forced the small family proprietors and cultivators to sell their holdings by sheer pressure of economical competition, are paralleled to-day in the great factory-farms of Western America and in the modern monopoly of the means of production, machinery, credit, &c., which enables a class to make use of the wage-slaves of the nineteenth century to crush out skilled handicraftsmen and small producers generally. Our English pauper class inside and outside the workhouse, is in many respects more miserable than even the proletari and slaves of ancient Rome. But the circumstances with us are far more complicated than they were in any of the old civilisations based upon open and acknowledged slavery. A Licinian law, or an agrarian agitation which should carry all the reforms proposed by the Gracchi, would go but a very little way towards allaying the ills from which we suffer. In order to help on that growth from below, which can alone remedy the anarchy of our present agrarian system, it is absolutely necessary to deal with the relations now existing from the point of view of their historical development within the limits of our own

And this the rather that we are, economically

rations, if not centuries, in advance of any

n nation.

In the fifteenth century, the period at which our historical survey of the growth of the domination of capital began, the land of England was held by a great number of private persons, subject to certain personal dues to feudal superiors, and partly in common for the use of all, as pasture for sheep, cattle, and the like. How the small proprietors were driven off their lands, and how, on various pretexts, the common lands were enclosed and appropriated; in what shameful fashion also the lands of the church were seized and divided up among the aristocracy, has already been recorded. The total result of this long career of forcible and economical expropriation from the sixteenth century onwards, is that we now have a mere handful of landowners over against 30,000,000 of landless people. These landowners let their lands to capitalist farmers who, in turn, hire landless serfs in the shape of agricultural labourers at starvation wages to work for them. During this period, not only the relations between the parties interested, but the very ideas about land and landed property have completely changed.

The feudal lord who, subject to his fealty to his superior, was himself the head of a whole society of feudatories and subfeudatories, received services and dues from his inferiors in accordance with well-understood personal agreements on both sides; he, as well as they, had clear defined obligations. What was paid to him was not paid as rent for land, but as the condition of personal connection: the lands themselves were called tenements. The small peasant farmer regarded the land, not as the means of getting a money return or profit, but as giving him good subsistence or possibly even wealth and comfort for himself and his family. Land represented a species of property which gave food and clothing in return for labour expended upon it, and upon

the animals which belonged to the holder; land was, as a rule, in no sense a capital which returned a given rate of interest or a definite rental in money. With the decay of the feudal system and the growing importance of the farming class with capital, all this changed. The landlord increased his holding in land on account of the political and social importance which its possession ensured him, and the secure return in money-rents it gave; large capitalists who had made accumulations out of other men's labour in different fields of business, bought land for the same reasons, and reckoned their amount of purchase on the capitalised value of so many years' money rental.

The men who provided this rental as the small freeholders and small farmers disappeared, were the farmers with capital who hired the land from the landlord in order to make a profit out of it, just as they might have hired a machine in order to make a profit out of that. Of course, the one profit like the other is made out of the labourers who are employed in the first instance, or in part out of the consumers in the second; but the fact remains, that the landlords became economically mere hangers-on of the capitalist farmers, who got the entire produce of the soil, and paid the landlords a certain proportion of its average saleable value. This proportion or rent being paid only in such amount as left an average net profit on the farmers' capital employed after payment of the labourers' wages and other unavoidable outgoings.*

If the farmer did not exist, and the landlord were a

* The division of the product of the soil between landlord and capitalist, after the labourer has taken his share, is determined by the value of the product relatively to the finished product when brought for exchange. Rodbertus.

commercial capitalist as well as the owner of the land, he could, of course, either farm the land himself, organising the labour of the agricultural labourers by means of a bailiff, or he could, provided the people on the land had no other occupation to turn to, and were unable or unwilling to emigrate, rack-rent the cultivators direct. By employing a bailiff as capable as the capitalist farmer, he might possibly obtain for himself the entire rent and the average return on his capital too—that is to say, the whole of the produce which could be raised according to the science of the time, less the amount paid to the agricultural labourers in the shape of competition wages. By rack-renting the cultivators direct, the landlord would likewise obtain the total produce, less so much as would keep the cotter cultivator and his family in the ordinary standard of life to which they were accustomed. Rent in this sense, therefore, is all that the man who owns both the land and the capital can get after the labourers on the estate have been clothed, fed, and housed, in accordance with their usual standard. If one man owned the soil of an island and had sufficient power at his back to enforce his presumed "rights," he might evict everybody upon it who was not content to exist upon the standard of nourishment he saw fit to ordain. The rest would be his rent. When, as in the South and West of Ireland, the standard of life was reduced, and population was increased by the introduction of the potato, the rents of the landlords were increased by the growing competition for land, the improvements made by half-starved serfs were coolly appropriated by the monopolists, and the capitalist farmer scarcely made his appearance at all.

The culture of land in England is therefore carried on upon what is, so far, an exceptional system, and to

argue as if rent, wages, and interest on capital were a necessary division of the produce of the soil, when such a division only occurs in quite an exceptional and highly-complicated system of society such as ours—to reason as if such an arrangement were universal, is utterly absurd. The profit which the farmer takes on his capital is really so much deducted from the total rent which the landlord might otherwise exact. Or, on the other hand, the rent is so much deducted from what the capitalist might otherwise get as profit. Ricardo's theory of rent assumes the universal existence of a society based upon capitalism, and even so, is not correct; for the supposed law of diminishing returns to capital employed has now been disposed of theoretically, as it had been falsified in practice ages before Ricardo wrote.

Land, however, is now capital in England just like any other fixed capital, in fact as well as in idea, and has to be renewed in precisely the same way, though perhaps in a few cases it is exhausted rather more slowly, and requires less frequent renewal. Moreover, farming is carried on for profit, just like any other manufacture, and the farmer, as he knows to his cost, has to compete against foreign farmers in the open market of the world, just as the home manufacturer must compete with his foreign rival. And besides the agricultural labourers, like the workers of the towns, compete against one another for a mere subsistence wage of the lowest kind, and would so compete to-morrow whether the land were let out by private owners or by the State, unless their labour were organised for their own benefit.

It has been necessary to put these points about agricul-
-al land thus plainly, because of late years the whole
has been confused by arguments in favour of the
nfiscation of competition rents by the State, as

if this by itself were a remedy for all social ills and the monopoly of agricultural land were the gravest injury from which the workers suffer. That the land of England is by no means cultivated to its highest point; that such vast tracts should be owned by individuals; that 2000 men should practically have half of the island; that 30,000,000 of people should be entirely divorced from all interest in their own soil—all these are grave drawbacks, and involve the most serious danger of bloodshed and revolution. But it is quite ridiculous to talk of the landlord as the sole and particular cause of the distressed condition of the mass of our agricultural population; still more foolish to argue that the exaction of rent for land is the chief cause of the sad condition of the mass of the workers in our great cities. If agricultural rents and ground rents were taken by the State to-morrow, the main difficulties of our great social problem would be almost as far from solution as ever.

It needs but few figures to make this clear. Out of the total agricultural production of Great Britain, which is estimated to be worth, one year with another, £300,000,000, the landlords take, at the outside, little more than one-fifth, or £65,000,000 as rent. But, as the late Mr Toynbee*

* The death of this clever and sympathetic young economist, after his two lectures at St Andrew's Hall, was a matter of the deepest regret to all who knew him. Mr Toynbee could scarcely bring himself to face the fact that England is on the eve of a bitter class struggle, but his sympathies were wholly with the people. At the time of his death he was engaged on a most important work, in which he meant to deal exhaustively with the industrial revolution in England, partly discussed in the foregoing pages. In a letter to the present writer shortly before his death, Mr Toynbee expressed a hope that the new school of English economists to which he belonged, would do something to remove the contempt felt of late years in Europe and America for the third-rate eclectic middle-class school represented by the recent economical writer in this country.

pointed out, of this £65,000,000, not more than £30,000,000 would represent the "unearned increment" owned by individual landlords. Say that the ground-rents and royalties amount to another £60,000,000, only one-half of this would be unearned increment either; and it is still the fact that by mere confiscation of competition rents the State would not get more than £60,000,000 a year: the rest being, in one way or another, profit on invested capital which, on this basis, it is not proposed to touch.

Now, granting that this is a vast sum, which would pay at least two-thirds of our present imperial revenue, now levied by direct and indirect taxation—and this is the proposal of the champions of the enforced confiscation of competition rents—what class would be benefited thereby? The "unearned increment" of the landlords, that is to say, the amount of rent which they take, apart from the return on the capital they themselves have invested, is put at £60,000,000, and even of this much is taken back by the capitalist class as interest on mortgages, &c. But if it be confiscated and so applied, who gain? Unquestionably the capitalists, who will be relieved of taxation to a large amount themselves, and who, on the taxation of the workers being lessened, would reduce wages on the average by the amount of such remittance.* Granting to the fullest extent the right and the duty of a despoiled people to take back its own land from the handful of holders, either with as little compensation, if any, as may seem advisable, let us fully under-

* A remarkable instance of how capitalists take advantage of reduction of taxation without any benefit to the workers, has lately been given in the tobacco trade of the United States. A reduction was made · amounted to 1 dollar 25 cents on a certain weight. The workers ·cked out" because they asked for a 20 cents rise in wages out ·ount!

[redacted] a fair estimate is to be made: [redacted] with the history of the country can for a moment honestly dispute—that the landlords have levied of its shillings the proper amount of rent it ever is assessed by their own ancestors, who took [redacted] merely preferential competition rents, without reference to the surrounding economical conditions of the people in a wide sense indeed. Out of the total agricultural produce, as has been said, the landlords take as rent at most £85,000,000. There are £235,000,000 left. How is this divided? The number of agricultural labourers is 1,250,000. If we put the average earnings of an agricultural labourer's family at £40 a year, the labourers get a total amount of £50,000,000; there is consequently left no less than £185,000,000 for the bankers, farmers, distributors, manufacturers, and others connected with the agricultural interest, as against £115,000,000 for landlords and labourers together.

That the landlord class does not work with its hands, and are merely hangers-on of the capitalists, that further it would be most desirable to take the land and use it—land in country and land in town, mines, parks, mountains, moors for the benefit of the people by the people collectively, would be admitted freely by thinkers who have no mind merely to dispossess one class, in order to strengthen a meaner and a worse class—the capitalists—in their place. Those who alone produce the wealth get the least of it under existing conditions. How are they to gain the fruits of their labour and improve the whole status of their class, of the workers alike in town and country? How are agricultural labourers [redacted] artisans to make common cause, so that by organising th[redacted], and by using rent or taxation if

taken by the State for the general good they may deal with agricultural land and land in cities, in such wise as will restore, in part at least, the old common property on a wider basis?

We have seen that the existing system of production and exchange, does but bring about anarchy for the workers and even for the capitalists themselves. Land tilled more and more by machinery, with fewer and fewer hands in proportion to the total produce, still does not keep pace in progress with manufacture. The relative prices of agricultural produce and luxuries have been completely subverted since the middle ages. Agricultural produce which then was cheap in comparison with common luxuries, is now relatively dear, small luxuries and manufactured goods being cheap. Thus in considering "the land question" as it is called from the point of view of (1) the agricultural labourers and (2) artisans of the cities, we are at once driven to consider the organisation and co-operation of the workers in all branches of industry, to reflect as to how their efforts can be most usefully turned to account for the advantage of the whole country, whilst new machinery and the employment of new natural forces, such as electricity, and the sun's direct heat turned into motive power, are revolutionising all the conditions of production—a problem far exceeding in complexity the taxation of agricultural land to its full rental value, or proposals for giving every one five acres of soil.

Labourers in country and town are ill-paid and ill-housed, reducing their own wages by competing among themselves, and exposed often to the competition of Irishmen and foreigners who reduce them still further. easures can alter a state of things based upon s competition. To deal fairly alike with the

land and the labourer—and our best experts state that the soil of Great Britain could be profitably made to produce twice its present amount of food, even under present conditions—a complete re-organisation of production and exchange between town and country is needed. In the cities, of course, where ground rents arise from a different sort of competition, their confiscation or purchase at a low price by the municipality would have a better effect, provided of course, the property and revenue thus acquired were used for the general benefit.* So far, however, even land in cities owned by corporations or municipalities has not been used to give better homes to the body of the people, or to reduce the competition for house-room. The one idea has been to obtain as great a return from the land as possible, in order to lower rates, in the same way that the general confiscation of rents would, on the nationalisation of the land scheme, be applied to reduction of imperial taxation. But this again arises from the fact that all city administration is under the control of men who look upon society from the trading point of view, and are content with the system which enriches the upper and middle by hopelessly degrad-

* The very idea that confiscation may be resorted to in the interest of the mass of the people, necessarily lowers a price which depends upon the number of years purchase of the rent—a purely ideal valuation, which assumes the permanence of the present conditions. Thus the land in Ireland has much decreased in capital value, and as the idea of nationalisation spreads in England the same effect will be produced here. Credit, security, the permanence of the capitalist predominance —shake these thoroughly, and the amount of "compensation" to be paid to monopolists will not be very ruinous. Think of that, railway magnates, and water-companies as well as landlords. Besides, whenever I see a labourer worn-out and hopeless from over-work, I ask myself what compensation can you give him for his wasted, miserable life? If "compensation" is in the wind, the workers have centuries of robbery to be compensated for.

ing the working class. That individuals like the Duke of Westminster, the Duke of Portland, Lord Salisbury, the Duke of Bedford, Lord Derby, Sir James Ramsden, and others, should own land upon which whole cities or large portions of cities stand, and act with almost absolute authority in regard to certain matters, which most nearly concern the welfare of the inhabitants, preventing the erection of markets, or of artisans' dwellings, exacting enormous sums for land required for improvements, and using their so-called rights entirely for their own profit—that this monstrous monopoly should be permitted to continue, is clearly in direct opposition to the public interest.

Unquestionably, then all land required for urban purposes should be taken and held by the State, municipality, township or county board, that is to say, by the people who give value to such urban land in their collective capacity. In this case, assuming even the partial continuance of the present bourgeois society, it is far better that each city or town should exact the full competition rent, paying its proportion to the general fund than that private owners should be allowed to carry on their present exactions for individual profit.* For in this way, not only do such rents go to the reduction of taxation or rates—an arrangement which, as already urged, by no means necessarily benefits the mass of the people—but the municipal authorities necessarily retain the power to erect buildings of their own on land of their choice, to secure a sufficiency of parks and

* I am aware that there are some who suppose that our present bourgeois arrangements must be totally destroyed and others substituted a blow. But, however successful a revolution might be, it is mankind cannot change its whole nature all at once. Break certainly, but never forget the fact that the new forms *must* he old.

open spaces and to superintend new buildings, if handed over to private enterprise in accordance with the existing transition system. Here, then, the land would be dealt with in much the same way as the lands which are already administered by municipalities or school boards save that in any arrangements where the people at large controlled their own business, such property would be used for the advantage of all and not in accordance with the opinions or prejudices of a mere profit-mongering class. Here, as in every other field, the antagonism between the material interests of the wage earners and the profits of the traders, the actual conflict between the people who work and the classes who trade upon their labour, is reflected by the thought of the time in the struggle between the collective view of the nation's interests which shall allow free scope and individuality to all, and the individual view which grants the right to independence to the few at the expense of misery and degradation for the rest. The conflict can only be decided by the complete victory of the people, which again can only be peacefully secured by the most thorough combination among the people themselves.

In any case, "nationalisation," or rather "communisation" of land, is a far easier matter in cities than in the country. For in agriculture there is not only the class struggle for the general administration, or the appropriation of rent for public purposes as a transition remedy, to consider, but also the organisation of rural labour. At present all projects of reform, whether propounded by Tory or Liberal, deal only with the distribution of the agricultural produce between the landlord and the farmer, between the landowner and his capitalist bailiff or villicus. What is the real condition of the agricultural labourer? how much labour

would be needed with the present improved machinery to produce sufficient food profitably for the whole population? in what manner can the individual interest be best harmonised with the general good? These are points of infinitely greater importance and difficulty—more especially that of the arrangement of labour and the distribution of production between the inhabitants of town and country—than the mere hand-to-mouth consideration of local taxation, which leaves the condition of the labourer wholly untouched, whatever it may do for the landlord or the farmer; or the right to compensation for improvements and freedom from distraint for rent which concern the farmer alone, but in nowise benefit the real producers.

The figures already given prove clearly that the number of hands needed to produce a given amount of agricultural wealth have decreased enormously since the beginning of this century, and yet no one could contend that the agricultural labourers or the artisans of the cities have greatly benefited by this reduction of the amount of necessary labour. The profits of the farmers, the bankers, brokers, etc., have increased but not the remuneration of the labourers to any appreciable extent. The people have been removed from the soil more and more, and the density of the population in our cities has been unnaturally and injuriously increased. At certain times in the year the floating labourers of the cities migrate to the rural districts for harvest work of various kinds; but no attempt is made to arrange this migration systematically, to protect properly the women and children, or save in a very insufficient and perfunctory way, to secure decent
on for these chance workers. This, perhaps, is
when we see how the permanent agricultural
ill lodged. If the farmers and landlords

between them treat the people whom they are daily in contact with as official reports show they do, it is scarcely to be expected that wanderers from the great cities should be regarded as much above the brutes.

One of the greatest drawbacks to the present system of landownership—the modern latifundia—is, however, felt in Ireland and Scotland in the unchecked power of eviction. In England oppression takes the shape of social and political injustice, but eviction is not felt. The farmer, as a rule, is well-to-do, and the agricultural labourer has nothing to be evicted from. The cottier and the crofter stand in a different position, and even more atrocious injuries than those of the sixteenth century have been inflicted by our hereditary legislators and their hangers-on across St George's Channel and on the other side of the Tweed, within the last fifty years. No words can exaggerate the horrors wreaked upon the miserable people of Ireland in the years which immediately succeeded the great famine of 1847. Houses torn down, men, women, old people, children of tender years thrust out in the depth of winter to perish on the highway, their neighbours refused the right to succour them, all shelter impossible, hundreds of thousands were thus rendered homeless and destitute. No wonder that the remembrance of those fearful atrocities, carried out by the dominant class and encouraged by the English Government, should have raised up on the other side of the Atlantic millions of people of Irish descent who hate our very name and persistently strive to overthrow our power. Similar frightful scenes have been enacted, as we know, within the past three years, and the force of 12,000 armed constabulary and 30,000 troops has been used to crush the justifiable rising of a people against intolerable oppression.

In Scotland the conduct of the landlords towards the crofters, in many instances, has been almost as bad. The hardships of the Sutherland clearances have been often recorded. The family which received Garibaldi might well have looked at home for worse grievances than the people of Italy ever suffered from. At this very time the Highlands of Scotland are turned into moors, deer parks, and sheep-walks, and often a shepherd and his dog are alone to be seen where hundreds and thousands of families formerly lived in comfort and independence. In Scotland, as in Ireland, the people in many districts have been forced from the rich soil of the plain into the mountains and morasses around, because it suited the pleasure or the profit of the proprietors so to drive them. Yet these very proprietors had no better right to the land than the men they dispossessed. Wrong, fraud, and robbery were made legal by class enactment, and the "rights" of landlords against the people were enforced by police and soldiers paid and provided out of the labour of the people themselves.

Such works as Mr Mackenzie's on the Highlands, Mr Godkin on the infamies of the Irish evictions, Mr Russell Wallace on Land Nationalisation, the instances given in Mr Henry George's work on Progress and Poverty, and the now constant evidence of the harm done by private property in land which appears even in the capitalist press —for landlords and capitalists seem happily in a fair way to fall out with one another—have rendered it unnecessary to enlarge upon the monstrous evils involved in the ownership of land as fully as heretofore. But in every direction the mischiefs are almost incalculable alike in town and in country. In towns the shameful style of building now in vogue is largely due to the system of building leases, whilst the

difficulty in connection with the housing of the mass of the people can never be solved until the land is taken out of private hands altogether. In country the whole arrangements have practically broken down, even from the point of view of the farmers. Whilst leaving aside the condition of the agricultural labourers, it is monstrous that a country which could easily and profitably supply all its own food should be forced by the mischievous narrowness and greed of a small minority to import to a most dangerous extent the first necessaries of life.*

But the most important point for the moment is that passed over above, namely, the actual position of the agricultural labourers under the present landlord and capitalist farmer system of food production. The most trustworthy collection of facts in regard to this matter is still contained in the official reports on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, published thirteen and fourteen years ago. Though some slight improvements have been made the most recent statistics show clearly that affairs are, on the whole, much the same now as they were then, and that the agricultural labourers as a body may well envy the well-fed serfs of old time, or even the slaves of the West India Islands or the Southern States. No actual open slavery could be more galling than their nominal freedom.

At the period of this Women and Children's Employment Commission, the condition of the agricultural population will be seen to have been such as to involve certain deterioration of the mental and physical strength of the people. The farmers were quite as ready to overwork and underfeed

* It is estimated that we shall import this year 17,000,000 quarters of wheat against 8,000,000 grown at home.

women and children as their fellow slave-drivers the factory owners, mine-exploiters, and cotton-lords. The employment of women is almost universally denounced. "It is ruination to growing girls," according to a chairman of a Board of Guardians.* "No greater evil," says Lord S. G. Osborne, "social or physical, affects the agricultural population, than the employment of young girls; they are the destined mothers of another generation, and on their healthy condition as wives will much depend the health and strength of the parents of both sexes of that generation." Yet women in many counties are out at work in all weathers, and often, as in the factories, up to within a few days or hours of pregnancy. By Act 3, George IV., c. 126, s. 131, boys under thirteen were forbidden to drive a cart along the road; but this Act was constantly evaded in all the counties with the result that, in the opinion of Dr Aldridge, "the prevention of proper muscular development, and very often the production of tuberculous diseases" are due to this cause.† "The sameness and overhardness of toil mars the young and yielding bones and muscles. It is seen in their after life in a way to me most clear; there is a want of physical energy, of what I may call labour-pluck, a deadening of mind and body force. A boy of this sort (seven or eight years old), gets up with his father at four or five, has to help to prepare and feed the horses, walks from six till two, except a little halt for meals, then comes to dinner and returns to feed the horses. I see the effect of this early work in making the boys bow-legged."‡ In fact the poor little creatures had the very life crushed out of them in early childhood, and then our legislators marvel that

* 2nd Report, Agricultural Commission, p. 15.
† P. 16, Evidence, 5. ‡ Evidence, p. 23.

"recruits" from the agricultural districts who go into the army, maintained to keep up this state of things, should be so weak and ignorant on first joining. Education at this period, prior to the School Board, was practically non-existent in many districts, and the children who grew up under this terrible darkness and oppression are now the young men and young women of our rural districts.

But I will take the Report of Mr Edward Stanhope, a member of an aristocratic and landowning family, who was one of the Assistant-Commissioners, and is now one of the younger leaders of the Conservative party. His honesty shines through the whole Report, but it is strange that the writer of it cannot see that landlordism and capitalism together, when freed from all restraint, necessarily bring about this deplorable state of things for the workers. Mr Stanhope himself visited the counties of Lincoln, Nottingham, and Leicester, Dorset, Kent, Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, and Rutland. In Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, the wages of good farm-hands varied from 15s. a week, the highest, to 11s. a week, the lowest, and these were considered high wages, though the average rent of a cottage is 1s. 6d. a week out of this.* Women and children are commonly employed in the fields, the wages of the women varying from 5s. to 6s. a week; and for the children, from 2s. to 3s. a week, the number of hours work being twelve. The system of the farmer lodging his hands and being, as it were, the head of the household, is quite disappearing. Farmers have become far too luxurious to share their labourers' fare. The gang system, both public and private, is in full swing in the three first counties, with the result of the most horrible immorality and foul language, among

* Repo[illegible] 74, 75.

even the youngest boys and girls.* No greater abomination has ever been known under any system of forced slavery than that to be found under the gang system in free England. One witness unaccustomed to the country, though a magistrate, says that "he was astounded at the language he heard from the mouths of the children, and their obscene manners unblushingly practised in an open manner in the fields."† But what does all this matter to the farmers, or so far as that goes, to the landlords? The farmers are, for the most part, absolutely in favour of keeping the people without any education at all, and are bitterly opposed to allowing the labourers allotments at a fair rate.‡ Such improvements render them too independent, and likely to join the Agricultural Labourers' Union, or similar combinations against the "eternal law" of supply and demand. At any rate the morality of these gangs is still shocking to contemplate, and the ignorance little better; yet though some beneficial restrictions have lately been enforced by law, the "convenience of the farmer" is still chiefly consulted.

But the condition of the labourers in Dorsetshire, and the other counties enumerated above, is still worse. In Dorsetshire, the average wages for an ordinary labourer were, in 1870 and are now, 8s. a week with, and 9s. a week without a cottage rent free. All perquisites and piece-work made the most of, he does not earn more than 10s. to 11s. a week. If it were not that in some districts the gardens are large, "the wages would sometimes hardly be sufficient to support

* Evidence, 121, 127, 146.

† Evidence, 291. "The women are far worse than the men," also, "the older the girls the greater the evil. Evidence, 250.

‡ Evidence, it may be added, is miserable. See Evidence, 270.

§ Also employing "Paddies"—Irishmen, in harvest time on

life."* Many of these very gardens, however, "are bringing in a profit of £4 an acre," the rate of letting in one locality for this purpose is £6, 6s. an acre! As to cottage accommodation, a great improvement is said to have taken place; but as it seems that in parish after parish families with five children have only one bedroom, and Mr Stanhope himself "saw whole rows of cottages with no privy and abounding in nuisances of all kinds,"† what must have been the state of things before the "improvements" began? In Kent, pretty as the cottages look outside, the accommodation is very insufficient, the rent of a cottage being 2s. to 2s. 6d. a week.‡ "As to Shropshire," says Mr Stanhope, "the point especially deserving of attention is the infamous character of the cottages. . . . Many cottages are to be found, belonging to the owner of the soil, which are a dis-

* Second Report. Mr Edward Stanhope, p. 5.

† 323. Appendix II.—Nottinghamshire.

301. Evidence of D——, labourer. I've ten children altogether myself five of each sort, so I know as much as most people. I never had but one girl go out to the fields, and if I live and can keep the others away, I shall. Girls oughtn't to go with boys under any circumstances. . . . The parents can't help them, so the girls must go to work. . . . My boy, when he goes to Carburton (three miles), has often to be up at 4.30 in the morning. He leaves off work at 6, and gets home when he can. He has turned nine years; I should say he's near ten. They earn more than they get going backwards and forwards, but we can't get work for them anywhere else. The Duke is destroying all the farm-land and throwing it down in seed. Some of the farmers here that used to be employing eight or nine men, have only two or three now. I expect worse times for us. Then there's the lake and all he's making; that won't make work for poor people. Bless you, there's not room in the houses. There's plenty of them with two or three families in them. There's a row further up with three families in one of the houses." This is a fair specimen of the evidence, and of the condition of the people as regards h[illegible]m. The Duke named is the late Duke of Portland, who catac[illegible]lbeck Park.

‡ P. 12.

grace to any civilised country. In one parish, out of sixty-two cottages owned by large landowners, twenty-nine have one bed-room only; while out of thirty-six owned by railway and small proprietors, only seven have this limited accommodation. With this state of things it is very hard for those charged with the education of the poor to contend." So I should imagine. But our Sub-Commissioner surely did not suppose that his class, as a class, cares about that. Enough to say that the evidence shows clearly that morality, decency, cleanliness are utterly impossible in such conditions of lodgment.

The wages in Kent, Shropshire, Cheshire, and Staffordshire are variable, but nowhere do they average more than 12s. a week, slack time being taken into account.* Let any man consider what that is to support a family upon when rent, taxes, and firing have been deducted. Of course, in such circumstances the father of a family looking, as he is forced to look, only to keeping the wolf from the door for the time, is obliged to let his wife and children earn what they can from the farmer, even at the expense of loss of health and degradation of morals. But I will give, in conclusion, a long passage from Mr Stanhope's report, and bearing in mind that things are no better now—for such improvements as have been made are more than counterbalanced by the depression which has weighed upon the agricultural community for years past, owing to bad seasons and American competition—surely it is high time that steps were taken to reorganise our whole system of landowning

* [illegible] a man has been condemned to gaol for refusing to [illegible]ges were raised to 9s. a week from 8s. Lord [illegible] rack-renter, now Governor-General of Canada, [illegible] Bench of Magistrates who pronounced this,

and cultivation in the direct interest of the agricultural labourers and their families, utterly regardless of the vested interests of the landlords or of the farmers in the maintenance of the existing infamous serfdom. Middle-class political economy must no longer be allowed to stand in the way of a complete removal of such illusory "freedom of contract" as that which produces these deplorable results.

After commenting upon the defects of the system in some other respects, Mr Stanhope proceeds: *—"Part payment in kind is still more objectionable when combined with an irregular date for payment. There is much to be said against a fortnightly system, as tending to drive men into debt, but far more against the monthly payment often adopted in the counties of Dorset and Salop. They are even not always paid at any regular interval. Some landowners themselves are setting the very bad example of paying at irregular intervals of many weeks, during which time the labourer is left to live upon credit. Much is said, and especially in Dorset, of the extra wages earned at piece-work. A skilled man will no doubt deserve and obtain exceptional remuneration, but as to the mass of the agricultural labourers, their piece-work (if they have any) is limited to the summer, and frequently to the hay and corn harvest. Too often it is the case, as described by one witness, 'that the labourer's winter income is too little to meet his winter wants, and he is obliged to mortgage, so to speak, his summer wages.' (Evidence, 73.) Out of the harvest or other extra earnings the boot-bill is paid. This difficulty will always be found to be in the way of the successful establishment of co-operative stores while wages continue as low as at present. All labourers are ready to go there

* Report, p. 28, § 185.

in summer when they have money, but in winter they are obliged to resort again to dealers who are willing to give credit. In the same way the pig of the agricultural labourer is practically 'mortgaged.' The greater part of it is sold, or returned to the farmer in payment of its original cost before fattening, and the instances are comparatively rare in the low-wage counties where he is able to eat the whole of it himself. In many cases, and far more often than is generally supposed, his employer will not allow him to keep a pig at all. And this proves a loss to him, not only in the value of the meat for eating, or for conversion into cash, but as depriving him of a means of utilizing all refuse, and securing adequate manure for his garden. *There can be no doubt that in the greater part of these counties the labourers are sadly underfed,* especially when not allowed to keep a pig."

Just think of that, ye lovers of free contract, you enthusiasts for the reigning political economy, the free labourer is "not allowed" to keep a pig! "In such a case, unless their earnings very far exceed the usual average, even those men who are most regularly employed have to be content with a diet which consists almost entirely of bread, potatoes, and cheese. The wife of a Dorset shepherd in regular work, thus described her food to me:—We don't have a bit of butcher's meat, not for half a year; we live on potatoes, bread, and pig-meat, and are very thankful if we can get a bit of pig-meat; we often sit down to dry bread. For harvest dinner we send out some boiled potatoes, a bit of cabbage, and we put a bit of fat to the potatoes.' (Evidence 10.) A family with three children earning, and 'who have never had sixpence from the parish, buy a little pig-meat; we use it with the potatoes, we don't often have a dish of pig by itself; at

harvest we eat some cheese, but not at any other time. We don't often get potatoes' (Evidence, 11.) 'Their diet is bread and cheese and potatoes, with a little bacon, in the families that are best off. But for the last few years, pigs have not been so common' (Evidence, 20.) And this in a county in parts of which 'fuel is so scarce' that the 'families as a rule never have a fire except at meal-times, even in the depth of winter'! (Evidence, 20.)

"As I went north, the greatest difference to be noted in the condition of the agricultural population was the increased comfort afforded them by the greater cheapness of fuel: yet even in Cheshire 'hardly any labourers eat meat at home, though some few can afford a little occasionally on Sunday. Potatoes with butter milk, if they can get it, is the ordinary food. Sometimes a little beer as a luxury. Where a labourer's wife takes his dinner to him, it is then either hot potatoes in a covered basin, or else gruel thickened with a little treacle or sugar' (Evidence, 156.) In Shropshire, again, the wife of a waggoner in constant employment was last year 'four months without any bacon or meat, because the pig had born a little one. *We had nothing but potatoes and salt, bread and water.*' (Evidence, 150 *a*.) And another had her 'pig-sty out of repair, and so killed no pig at Christmas; will have to do without bacon this year.' (Evidence 180 *b*.) In one Staffordshire village the diet of the labourer is almost wholly bread, cheese, and potatoes; they never eat butchers' meat, and many of them get no [illegible]on. But what I think they miss most of all is milk, [illegible]h cannot be got, and is a great loss to young children. [illegible]e above described is that which falls to the lot of [illegible]r of a hard-working and industrious man who is [illegible]habit of frequenting the public house."

And this, I once more say, is from the report of Mr Edward Stanhope, himself belonging to an aristocratic family, a member of the class which has driven the people from the soil, and is recorded in an official blue-book with all the corroborative evidence. Who can wonder that our most skilled medical officers, after a careful survey of the rural population, deliberately put it down as their opinion that the agricultural labourers *rarely* get enough food to keep them clear of diseases arising from insufficient nourishment —that, in fact, they most of them die by inches of slow starvation? The food provided in the prison and the workhouse is luxury compared with such miserable fare as is recorded above. Yet the agricultural labourers are the people who produce £300,000,000 a year at least of wealth, out of which the landlords seize £65,000,000 in rents, the farmers make their profits, and the house-owners take their rents again. In Wiltshire at this hour the average wages of the agricultural labourers do not amount, in hundreds of instances, to 2s. a week per head of family all round. In the workhouse it actually costs 3s, a head to feed the men, women, and children on pauper fare, though the food is bought wholesale and at the cheapest rate. No allowance, be it observed, is made for clothing, firing, housing, which the labourers have to provide somehow out of their 2s. a week per head of family. Live! this is not to live; it is to exist in perpetual misery, and to plod wearily in sickness and sorrow towards an ever-open grave.

Before taking the report of Dr Fraser, now Bishop of Manchester, it may be well to give a few excerpts from Mr Julius Jeffreys' remarks on the Diet of the Rural Labouring Classes published in the Fourth Report of the Commissioners, p. 139. After stating the well-known fact that

beef and mutton "are so rarely tasted by them that they may be said to form no part of their diet," he proceeds, "but the *sustenance* of the peasantry at all ages bears no due proportion to the toil to which they are reared," consequently "inadequate nutrition combined with constant hereditary toil produces a hereditary effect on the intellect, which, though little recognised, is in England of surpassing extent and much to be deplored. The contrast between the dulness of our village youth, placing them below the average of mankind, and the intellectual vigour of the classes above them rising superior to the average is truly remarkable. Its only and sufficient cause is to be found in the one I have named—sustenance wholly inadequate for supporting muscular labour and mental vigour also." And yet, with these frightful facts staring them in the face, all that our legislating wiseacres could do or have done is to improve somewhat the "education" of the rural children: the education they want is the education of good food, of which the poor infants are now robbed by the classes above them. "As sucklings," says Mr Jeffreys,* "they have to draw breast-milk from fountains, how adequately supplied might puzzle the physiologist to explain in numerous cases. When weaned they have to perform a duty of great national importance—an importance which can scarcely be exaggerated, that of laying the foundation of the sturdy frames which the empire requires to serve its interests in all manners of ways. Does not water more than milk, and too often water alone, form the liquid portion of the materials the infant constitution has to be built up with? In childhood milk has disappeared from the board, and its place is ill supplied, if supplied, by a scraping of butter or cheese. . . .

* Page 140.

The race already in many districts is lean, stunted, and prematurely decrepit. . . . I feel unable to close my sight against the evidence afforded by the fact that the present children of England are remarkably slow in learning and quick in forgetting what they learn, more especially when compared with their superiors of the same race—evidence that nutrition must be falling short of the demand made upon it." The people of England are, in short, being ruined in body and mind by a continuance of the present system. Nothing can be worse for them in the future than what they suffer at present.

Dr Fraser acted as Assistant-Commissioner in the examination of the counties of Norfolk, Essex, Sussex, Gloucestershire, and two districts in Suffolk. Here is what he says about the cottages:*—"The majority of the cottages that exist in rural parishes are deficient in almost every requisite that should constitute a home for a Christian family in a civilised community. They are deficient in bedroom accommodation, very few having three chambers, and, in some parishes, the larger proportion only one; they are deficient in drainage and sanitary arrangements; they are imperfectly supplied with water; such conveniences as they have are often so situated as to become nuisances; they are full enough of draughts to generate any amount of rheumatism; and in many instances are lamentably dilapidated and out of repair. . . . It is impossible to exaggerate the ill effects of such a state of things in every aspect—physical, social, economical, moral, intellectual. Physically a ruinous ill-drained cottage, 'cribbed, cabined, and confined,' and overcrowded, generates any amount of disease—fevers of every type, catarrh, rheumatism—as well as intensifies to the

* P. 35.

utmost that tendency to scrofula and phthisis which, from their frequent intermarriages and low diet, abounds so largely among the poor. Socially, nothing can be more wretched than the condition of 'open' parishes like Dorking in Norfolk and South Cerney in Gloucestershire, into which have been passed remorselessly the scum and off-scouring of their 'close' neighbours.* Economically, the imperfect distribution of cottages deprives the farmer of a large proportion of his effective labour power. . . . The moral consequences are fearful to contemplate. 'I only wonder,' writes one clergyman to me, 'that our agricultural people are as moral as they are. Modesty must be an unknown virtue, decency an unimaginable thing where, in one small chamber, with the beds lying as thickly as they can be packed, father, mother, young men, lads, grown-up and growing girls—two and sometimes three generations—are herded promiscuously where every operation of the toilette and of nature, dressings, undressings, births, deaths, is performed by each within the sight or hearing of all; where children of both sexes to as high an age as twelve or fourteen or even more occupy the same bed; where the whole atmosphere is sensual, and human nature is degraded into something below the level of the swine.' It is a hideous picture; and the picture is drawn from life. The medical gentlemen whose evidence I publish, assure me that cases of incest are anything but uncommon. We complain of the ante-nuptial unchastity of our women, of the loose talk and conduct of the girls who work in the fields, of the light way in which maidens part with their honour, and how seldom either a parent's or a brother's blood boils with shame

* Villages, that is, whence the landlords have driven the people to bring down the poor-rate in old days.

—*here*, in cottage accommodation, is the sufficient account and history of it all. And the character of the home affects profoundly the condition of the school. It would be a rare thing indeed to find education valued where domestic comfort and decency are impossible and unknown. A low physical condition induces a low moral condition and a low intellectual condition." *

Assuredly it does, and all honour to Dr Fraser for putting thus plainly a clear material proposition. But how shameful is it to our legislators, to our "governing classes," to our entire civilisation, that this state of things is still unremedied.

* Mr Samuel Clarke, Sanitary Inspector of the City of Norwich, "has had twenty years' experience in this capacity in rural and urban districts. Knows the whole county (Norfolk). Was specially engaged about three years ago by a local journal to report on the state of the cottages occupied by the labouring poor, and prosecuted the inquiry in all parts of the county extending over a period of four months. The results were published in the *Norfolk News*, and portions of them in the *London Times*. Is of decided opinion that at this moment the majority of cottages in the county occupied by the rural poor are of such a construction as is incompatible with their occupants growing up in habits of common decency, let alone morality. It is quite common, so that instances if necessary might be given to any extent, to find any number of persons from four to ten, or even more, of both sexes and of all ages, married and single, sleeping indiscriminately together, without any partition or curtain, in a single chamber. Cases have been known of a grown-up brother and sister, and of a mother and grown-up son occupying the same bed. People do not attempt to disguise these facts, and generally regret them, but say, 'What can we do?' The common lodging-houses in the City of Norwich as regards ventilation and provisions for decency, though filled with mendicants and tramps of the lowest class, are patterns of comfort compared with many of the homes of the agricultural poor. . . . The condition of the homes of the poor more than neutralize all the efforts that are made to elevate them socially or morally."

It is to this gentleman Dr Fraser refers in his report, when he says that "Mr Clarke of Norwich can tell anyone who will ask him tales of things he has himself seen horrifying enough to make the very hair stand on end."—Appendix, p. 215.

The permissive Acts which have been passed, the borrowing powers given to landlords are simply worthless. Far more stringent action is needed ere any real improvement can be made, and the impulse must come from the people themselves in large part at least. Let Lord Salisbury* and the other landlords who are now talking about improving the homes of our artisans look at home to the miserable feeding and infamous living of the agricultural serfs out of whose labour their rents are taken. For Mr Stanhope's and Dr Fraser's reports are no picked exceptions. Mr Portman, Mr Culley, and the other Assistant-Commissioners but repeat and enforce the same hideous story. Wages in the counties visited by Dr Fraser varied between 11s. and 13s. a week, and in his opinion, making allowance for lost time, the average earnings of the labourer are not more than the sum represented by this weekly wage, even when harvest earnings and extra pay for piece-work as well as perquisites are fully reckoned up.† Many do not earn as much as 11s. on the average. In regard to female children and gang labour Dr Fraser found the same objections as other Assistant-Commissioners. In the extreme northern counties of England higher rates of wages prevail among the labourers, and the people are better off, but, in the main, the agricultural labourers of England are probably to-day physically in a worse condition than they have been at any period of their history. Notwithstanding the praiseworthy attempts which have been made by individuals to remedy some portion of the evils, and the measures passed by the legislature in favour of allotments‡ and education, the population of rural England

* Lord Salisbury is interested in one of the most horrible dens in St Giles' as well.

† P. 23.

‡ The objection to small freeholds in the hands of needy labourers is well put in Mr R. F. Boyle's report. He says: "It sounds very

is still steadily deteriorating in consequence of conditions of existence which necessarily lead to degeneration, and entail permanent decay.

Scotsmen have an idea, however, that apart from the crofter system in the Highlands, and the poverty in the islands of Skye, the Lewis, &c., brought about by the infamous exactions of such landlords as Lord Macdonald, Sir James Matheson, and their like, the condition of the Scotch labourer is all that could be desired. Mr Culley puts the average wages of the Scotch ploughmen at something under £40 a-year, and their cottages are frequently miserable.* Mr Norman says:—"To say that the drainage of the cottages in Scotland is defective would be a gross exaggeration, because as a general rule no attempt is made at drainage at all. They seldom have any privies. The cottages on Lord Airlie's property at Cortachy in Forfarshire would probably compare favourably with the cottages belonging to most proprietors in this respect, and I found that on Lord Airlie's property there are only 79 privies to 401 cottages."† The drawbacks to the bothy system and the bondage system are also very great. In the main, the position of the hired labourer in the Lowlands of Scotland is superior to that of his fellow in England, and he is as a rule much better educated. Yet when a statement such as the following, by the Reverend Harry Stuart,‡ can be fathered by the official Commissioner, even Scotland seems to be no very grand country for the mass of the people.

well at first that every labourer should have his own little holding, but it too often ends in his only making use of it to borrow money which he can never repay, and getting into the hands of some small money-lender who will sell him up mercilessly." So in Ireland, so in India so in Germany, so in France and Austria.

64. † P. 37. ‡ P. 89.

"What have the married men nowadays to enable them to keep up their hearts and their heads? They must just retire to a town when unfit for heavy labour, whether they get jobbing-houses or not, such houses being too rare to allow any to have them longer than they are fit for such labour. And then what is there in a town to encourage them to struggle, or to keep a name clear of the poor's-roll, when their name now is never mentioned by friends and acquaintances? They care for no one's respect there, for no one hardly knows them, except fellow paupers, and few or none inquire after them from the country, except it may be their own children, whom they left there behind them. No place, no work can they get congenial to their feelings or their habits, and even their new kind of dietary sickens them. A garret, a cellar, a dusty pirn wheel, and foul air either soon end their days, or make them reckless of what may befal them;—yes, and their children reckless too, if they can still be touched (if divine grace permit it not)"—divine grace, I must say, reads a little queerly hereabouts—"with what has befallen their parents. Now this is no uncommon or over-charged picture, either as to facts or as to feeling and effects. If jobbing-houses were much more numerous, it would enable many a poor ailing farm servant, still in the prime of life, to retire from the constant heavy toil of following the horses, and go 'upon the spade,' so as to have a few days' rest to occasionally reinvigorate his frame. I have often been sorry for some men in such a state of temporary bad health, but under constant heavy work, and yet there was no help for it, but either to fag on uphill, till it should come to a final break-down, or give up the plough, and go at once to a town. Now, such men, if they could get but a year or two of jobbing might l

saved for many years in full efficiency, both to their families, and to their country." A pretty picture of noble Scotch freedom truly, a splendid example of the real position of that well-educated peasantry, which is now ground down into the dust, under the heel of the landlord and the farmer. The only chance of decent living, is to work yourself to death!

Wales more nearly resembles England, in the low rates of wages, and the general deficiency of education, though in some districts higher rates are obtained, owing to the mines and works. Throughout, the housing is bad, and morality, in our cant sense, low. In fact, the Welsh peasantry suffer, under the present system, to the full as much as their brethren in the southern counties of England.

The idea, however, prevails in some quarters, that an improvement has taken place during the last few years. This is not the case. Though in some instances the wages of agricultural labourers have risen, and their cottages have been improved, the important articles of meat, eggs, milk, and butter, are more than ever out of the reach of the agricultural labourer and his family. Moreover, the uncertainty of employment owing to the bad seasons, and other causes, has increased considerably. Meanwhile, the general state of affairs remains as it was. Commons continue to be enclosed in almost as shameless a manner, and with as monstrous a disregard for the interests of the people as ever. Mere expenditure of more capital on the soil, also by the farmer or the landlord, by no means necessarily benefits the agricultural labourer. Some of the most skilfully
ed districts in Great Britain, are notorious, as we have
the miserable oppression under which the agricul-

tural labourers live.* Moreover, during the last few years, the farmers themselves have been, in many cases, paying away their capital in rent, taxes, tithe, interest, and insurances, whilst the soil has deteriorated, and the amount of live-stock has decreased. The actual diminution of wealth has been most serious. Between 1872 and 1882 the average sown with wheat, barley, oats, and potatoes in England, Wales, and Scotland, fell from 9,183,000 to 8,402,000 acres; between 1874 and 1882 the number of cattle decreased by 320,000 head, and the number of sheep dwindled from 30,300,000 to 24,300,000, a reduction of one-fifth, or 6,000,000. This means unmistakeable impoverishment of the agricultural interest. At the very time, in fact, when more and more labour should be employed to make up for the injury caused by bad seasons, the farmers are nearly bankrupt.

The mischiefs of the existing system even from this point of view are serious enough. As Professor Wallace truly urges,—"The land is badly cultivated; the country is denuded of population, while the towns are overcrowded; many of the greatest necessaries of life (which are also its greatest luxuries), such as milk, butter, eggs, poultry, fruit, and vegetables, are all made scarce, dear, and bad by the denial of land to labourers and the middle-classes; and these products have to be imported from almost every country in Europe, and even from America, when they could all be abundantly produced at home, and we could have them at our very doors, better in quality and far cheaper than now." Mr Boyd Kinnear, a skilled practical farmer as

* See Table compiled from Agricultural Commission papers, by Mr Hugh Clements, of the Board of Trade, Agricultural Gazette, March 26, 1883. P. 303.

well as an economist, speaks in much the same strain, though opposed to nationalisation of the land. The attempts indeed being made by both the existing political factions to patch up the present arrangements, by bribery of the farmers by compensation for improvements, and the agricultural labourers by petty allotments, shows that the knowledge is spreading that the business of the country has been thrown out of gear. Such a fact that with the enormous improvements in stall-feeding, and dairy-farming generally, we have to pay actually £14,000,000 a year to foreign countries for butter, is a sufficient condemnation of the landlord, capitalist-farmer, and agricultural wage-slave trinity of rural production.

It cannot be alleged that climate is responsible for this, inasmuch as Denmark, with a far harder winter climate, supplies our principal amount of best fresh butter in the winter months, at the highly-paying price of 160s. (£8) the hundredweight, wholesale. Further illustrations of the unfortunate effect of the monopoly of the land by large landowners, and the method of letting the land in farms rarely below a certain size, could easily be given.

But the most important point for the country is always the condition of the producers, and the reports of the Sub-Commissioners of the late Royal Agricultural Commission may be taken as giving the most favourable possible view of the earnings of the farm labourers; for the Sub-Commissioners were by no means so impartial as their fore-runners of 1867-70, being devoted almost exclusively to the interests of the agricultural labourers' greatest enemy, the tenant-

Yet, even according to these prejudiced witnesses,

ates of wages, without making any allowance for

lack times, are summarised by Mr Hugh

Clements, of the Board of Trade—who also seems to consider the agricultural labourer as a well-to-do man—at the following amounts. In the six northern counties, the average money-wages average 17s. weekly; that is, in Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmoreland, Durham, Yorkshire, and Lancashire. In Cheshire, 16s. 6d.; in Stafford, Derby, Nottinghamshire, and Kent, 16s.; in Middlesex, 15s. 6d; in Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Surrey, and Sussex, 15s.; in Lincolnshire, 14s. 6d; in Shropshire and Cornwall, 14s.; in Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, and Devonshire, 13s. 6d.; in Herefordshire, Leicestershire, Rutlandshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Hants, 12s. 6d.; in Monmouth, Huntingdon, Gloucester, and Somerset, 12s.; in Dorset, 11s. 6d.; and in Wiltshire, 11s. These averages, it must be borne in mind, include the extra wages at harvest time, which involves extra work and, as stated, put the earnings in cash at the highest possible level. But now consider the following extract from Mr Doyle's report. After giving some details from the Report of 1834, for the purpose of comparison, he says—"*At no time, however, have weekly wages been sufficient to command for a family of average size a sufficient supply of the necessaries, not to speak of the reasonable comforts of life.* A farm labourer has given his household expenditure for the year as £48, 8s. 9½d., and his wages (having lost two days), at 2s. 4d. a day, £36, 4s. 4d. The earnings of his wife and child amounting for the year to £17, 8s. 2d., left a slight balance in his favour. Another labourer, having a wife and five children, with constant employment at 15s. a week, there being no earnings by wife or child, has furnished the following account, viz.:—

	Per Week.		
Rent,	£0	1	11
Clothes of five children,	0	1	2½
Boots,	0	1	3
Stockings,	0	0	6
Flour,	0	6	9
Tea (¼ lb.),	0	0	8
Sugar (3 lbs. at 3½d.),	0	0	10½
Butter (1 lb.),	0	1	2
Cheese (3 lbs. at 9d.),	0	2	3
Meat (4 lbs. bacon at 10d.),	0	3	4
Potatoes,	0	2	0
Soap,	0	0	4
Blue and Soda	0	0	1
Candles,	0	0	5
Matches and Blacking,	0	0	1
Coals (2 tons yearly, at 16s.)	0	0	7¼
Barm,	0	0	1½
Schooling,	0	0	5
Pepper and Salt,	0	0	1
Milk,	0	0	2
	£1	4	2¾

The children's clothing is put at £2, 3s. 2d., for five of them for the year: the man's and woman's clothes are apparently not included. It is worth noting also that no allowance is made for sickness, nor any for butcher's meat, or tobacco or beer, in the list given, which nevertheless amounts to 9s. more than the man's average weekly wages. Yet it would be curious to know what article ought to be knocked off from a list which only affords 2d. worth of milk in the week for five children.* Here is another instance from the

* It is needless to insist upon the low scale of diet and clothing 11s. a week represents, in the face of these figures. It would probably pay better to give higher wages to his human mule if only that n get on the average more than proportionately better work

ntlemen could not hit upon a much better way of grow- y surrounding themselves with a happy and contented

same report of Mr Doyle's: "A labourer, 36 years of age, having worked on a farm since he was 8 years old, has never had less than 15s. a week, gives his earnings and outgoings as follows:—

Receipts.	s.	d.	Expenditure.	s.	d.
Wages,	15	0	Rent,	1	7½
Value of garden,	1	6	Bread,	6	0
Extras,	1	0	Bacon,	2	6
			Tea and Sugar,	1	3
			Cheese (2 lbs.).	1	6
			Butter	1	6
			Fuel,	1	3
			Candles and Soap,	0	6
			Clothes,	1	6
			Schooling,	0	3
			Sundries,	0	6
	17	6		18	4½

And yet, in the face of these official statistics, there are well-meaning rectors with good incomes who can deliberately

peasantry. Many of them take great delight in experimenting on live stock. Improving the breed of men would apparently be quite as interesting an occupation. How to make a pig too heavy to bear its own weight, and to spoil good wholesome beef by overloading it with fat, are possibly very fitting subjects for philosophical investigation; but it would be quite as gratifying, one would think, to efface the famine lines from a poor man's face, to rekindle the cheerfulness in his downcast eyes, and to restore the vigour of his muscles. Amateur graziers are fond of making visitors go the round of their cow-houses and piggeries to remark the neatness and order that prevail there. Did it never occur to them that a visit to their labourers' cottages would be equally satisfactory to themselves if they were sure of finding there the same admirable arrangements for drainage, ventilation, and warmth, equally clean and comfortable beds, and inmates as well fed and thriving?" Thornton on "Over-Population," p. 359. Mr Thornton forgot when he wrote this passage that free labourers have no exchange value to the country gentleman, wherein they differ greatly to their disadvantage from the short-horns and the pigs.

propose a measure of compulsory insurance in the counties where wages are lowest, and attribute all the miseries of the agricultural labourers to "want of thrift." The truth is, that the rural labourer, like his fellow of the cities, is in such penury that pleasure is almost unknown to him, and he is too often driven to drink to drown his cares. Change the social conditions from early youth, secure the children not merely bare education—which means, even now, mere commonplace instruction that their poor feeding and squalid surroundings prevent them from taking advantage of—but a really pure and healthy existence, with sufficient food and leisure in return for wholesome work, and drunkenness or low debauchery would soon disappear. As it is, after a life of hopeless and degrading toil on starvation wages they have but the squalid misery of the workhouse to look to in old age. The landlord, the rector, the farmer, the whole array of consumers who have lived at ease on the labour of these underpaid wage-slaves grudge the worn-out labourer even the cost of maintenance after forty or fifty years spent in providing them with food and luxury out of his labour. Surely, if compensation is ever called for, it is the agricultural labourers as a class, not the landlords or the farmers, who may fairly demand it to-day. But political economy, that middle-class fetish, is appealed to in order to justify social conditions which utterly ruin the most valuable members of all society, and are maintained by brute force to satisfy class greed. There are, as the last census shows, 1,250,000 agricultural labourers. They produce, even with the present unscientific application of machinery and artificial manures, £300,000,000 a year on the average, or £240 a year per head. Making every allowance for the necessary expenses of distribution, surely enough should be left to give the producers a portion of their product sufficient

to keep them clear of those diseases arising from insufficient nourishment which, according to the medical testimony already recorded they at present *rarely* escape.*

Here at any rate we have before us on official testimony the condition of the agricultural producers in our England of to-day. It is deplorable enough. What is worse, if they produced twice as much by the application of more capital and machinery, and our total agricultural annual return were £600,000,000 instead of £300,000,000, the labourers under the pressure of unrestricted competition would get no higher pay, in proportion to the cost of food and lodging, than they do now. Moreover, as urged above, if the rents of the landowners were taken by the State to-morrow, and used for the reduction of all other taxation in the way that Mr Henry George and others propose, this by itself would benefit the labourers not at all if the farmers still maintained, as they would maintain, their ascendancy. The direct expropriation of landlords and the allotment of a few acres of land under the State to each agricultural labourer might by degrees have a better effect; but the present generation of labourers are too ignorant and too poor to maintain their ground, even on a very small scale, under the existing system of production for profit.

The first point that has to be established is the right of every man to a sufficiency of food to keep him in health in return for the ordinary day's labour. The next that such

* Mr Henry George has shown quite conclusively as against Mr Francis A. Walker that Marx's theory of the steady increase of the amount of capital required in all industries and the tendency to larger and larger operations applies to agriculture in the United States. The average size of the farms is growing census by census. Needless to add that in market-gardening the same rule applies, though where this industry is ranked as farming the contrary might seem to be the case. A market-garden of 50 acres might employ more capital than a farm of 500.

labour shall be organised to the best advantage in conjunction with that of his fellows in country and in town. Good housing is also essential, and the powers of the Local Governments might fairly be made compulsory in this direction. A reduction of the hours of labour necessarily accompanies these reforms. But the basis of every improvement must be good food and good education in childhood. In short, the land question as it affects the agricultural labourers cannot be separated from the great and complicated problem of the reorganisation of the present system of production and exchange in the interest of the producing class. If improvement is to be peaceful, the reorganisation cannot begin too soon. The very idea of even a wages-minimum is looked upon as ridiculous by those who guide our present development. They think like Mr Fawcett that they have quite settled the question when they have restated the old hack fallacies over again as solemn truths. But the facts must be faced. Men of the upper and middle classes who are not utterly devoid of all sympathy must make common cause with the workers in demanding that the power of the State shall no longer be used to maintain a system of land ownership and land cultivation which means, and cannot but mean, the permanent degradation of the producers. Here as in the great fields of manufacture and exchange, the first points to be considered are not how to secure rents for the landowner, compensation for the farmer, increased profit for the capitalist and justification for the discredited middle class economists and statesmen; but how to obtain and render permanent, health, happiness, sound living, light work and general education, physical and mental, for those who now struggle through existence in such misery as the official reporters themselves scarcely describe *in full.*

CHAPTER X.

THE PRESENT POSITION OF THE CITY PRODUCING CLASS.

IN order to appreciate the general conditions of production, and the manner in which the amount of wealth created is divided among the population, a few more figures are necessary, and these alone will show that, making what allowance we please for the power of society to modify the surroundings of the next generation, and thus to produce a healthier, better educated, and more moral nation in the future, the present distribution of wealth is so faulty as to render certain a general overturn, peaceful or bloody, ere many years have passed. The historical development of the struggle of classes has, in short, reached the point where, out of the rottenness of existing society, new and more wholesome growths will arise.

Plain figures alone are enough to give some idea of the truth. Thus, the general income of the country is now reckoned, by the most competent authorities, at £1,300,000,000 in round figures, or close upon that sum, though, of course, it is very difficult to fix any exact amount. Out of this total the landlords, the capitalists, the professional classes, and the profit-mongers absorb nearly £1,000,000,000, leaving for the producing class little more than 300,000,000.* Of course, in the £1,000,000,000,

* In 1867, the late Mr Dudley Baxter estimated the total paid in such wages at £254,729,000. The workers pay back about a fifth of this in rent.

are included the returns which many of the lower shop-keeping class obtain as the reward of labour in distribution, which is as exhausting as the labour of a large proportion of the wage-earners in production. But this class of small traders is dependent upon the proletariat when "times" are good, and is crushed down practically into the proletariat when "times" are bad. The domestic servants, who derive their support from the indolent rich, are also paid out of the sum named, this useless body increasing steadily with the progress of civilisation. On the other hand, much of the production itself is, as will be seen clearly below, utterly wasteful or harmful, and the producers who are engaged upon such work are themselves forced to fritter away their labour on goods which are called for by the luxurious classes, quite irrespective of their real inherent utility or beauty; or perhaps their labour is devoted to making intoxicating drinks to be largely and harmfully consumed by their own class. Still the proportions remain. Out of £1,300,000,000 of total income little more than £300,000,000 are paid to the productive wage-earners, who actually produce and distribute the wealth—about one-fourth of the whole.

But the entire national wealth of the community, though very small in comparison with what it ought to be, or even with the total income of the country as given above, is distributed even more faultily. According to Mr Mulhall's estimates, 222,500 families own £5,728,000,000 out of a total realised national wealth of nearly £8,000,000,000, or close upon £26,000 per family, with, of course, a corresponding income out of the £1,000,000,000 taken yearly by non-producing families; whilst 4,629,000 families possess but £398,000,000, or less than £90 per family. Doubtless

this fearful discrepancy is shaded over in actual life, seeing that 2,046,900 families own together £7,562,000,000, or about £3700 per family, showing that between the 4,629,000 families who own but £90 a family, on the average, and the 222,500 families who own £26,000 each family, there are some 1,800,000 families who own on the average about £1000 each family, with a corresponding share in the national income. Nevertheless, the contrast between the enormous wealth of the few and the poverty of the many is nowhere so great as in England, and the many are no longer so ignorant of the fact or its causes as in the days before the establishment of School Boards. Nor, in considering this portion of the subject, should the figures before given be neglected, that the total assessed to income-tax in 1882 above the limit of £150 a-year—and the returns are notoriously far below the mark—is close upon £600,000,000, or £100,000,000 more than the entire gross annual produce of the country forty years ago, and five times the value of the entire gross annual produce of the country when Arthur Young wrote a hundred years ago, which he estimated at £122,000,000.* During the last forty years the wages of the actual producers, however, are estimated to have increased but £30,000,000 or £40,000,000. The national wealth has increased in an enormously higher ratio—fully four times faster—than the population; but the people have not got their share of the increase even. This without regard to the fact that under our wasteful capitalist system we sweep down yearly into the sea at least £30,000,000 worth a-year of the most admirable manure in sewage, manure which, if properly applied, would

* I am aware, of course, that the effect of the gold discoveries modify these estimates; but not so much as might be supposed.

enhance the fertility of our fields almost beyond calculation, and afford far more food than any probable increase of a well-fed population could overtake.

Again, we have to consider the number of paupers and vagrants. Greater severity in enforcing the workhouse test at present keeps people from accepting relief until they are actually half dead from starvation, and leads outside charity to act more readily. Even so, too, it is calculated that 4,500,000 out of our entire population of 30,000,000 in Great Britain receive poor-relief or charity in one shape or another in the course of the year ; that is to say, one-seventh of our people are constantly driven to seek help from others in order to keep body and soul together, under that admirable society, which to assail, necessarily argues, as some say, ignorance, insanity, or unscrupulousness. For it has been proved over and over again that pauperism, in the form of need for relief, may come upon the most sober and industrious of our population in times of crisis or depression, or in consequence of the introduction of the most successful machine. There are some, of course, who, in the face of such facts and figures as have been brought forward already, contend that the main cause of all this fearful agglomeration of poverty in the face of ever-growing wealth, is the unfortunate inclination of English men and women to intoxicating drink. Beyond question, drink has an effect in making matters worse than they would otherwise be. The excessive consumption of wine, beer, spirits—especially the spirits—is injurious to the people. Mr William Hoyle of Bury, who is an enthusiast on this question, insists that the country loses £250,000,000 annually by its expenditure on intoxicating liquors, when account is taken of those who grow the grain to make them, those who manufacture, and those who

distribute them. Granting that much is wasted in this way—saying that all Mr Hoyle's contentions are just—still there remains the fact, too often proved, that misery, bad air, over-crowding, unwholesome and insufficient food as often drive to drink, as drink drives its votaries to pauperism and misery.

Mere abstinence from all intoxicating liquors on the part of a people who have used beer in one shape or another as their national beverage for upwards of a thousand years would not necessarily change the social conditions. The sober Englishman might be more ready to combine for social and political objects than his beer or spirit drinking fellows, but hitherto the most temperate portion of the working community have scarcely been the most ready to strive for the interests of their class; while if the whole working class reduced its standard of life by giving up beer without substituting an equally strong determination to have something else in its place, wages might be reduced by the force of competition even below their present level.

It may be well also to deal here with those who urge that the increased consumption of tea, sugar, and tobacco per head is conclusive as to the improvement, even the relative improvement, in the position of the working class. Sugar of course is food, and its reduction in price is advantageous to increased consumption; but the petty luxuries of tea, coffee, tobacco, &c. are ill purchased indeed at the loss of milk, butter, eggs, &c., which, owing to their enhanced price, the workers have been compelled to a large extent to forego since the last century. The drawback in fact to all these averages is that such averages necessarily leave out of account the greatly increased consumption of all these articles by the well-to-do classes and their hangers-on—a

remark which applies with at least equal force to the increased consumption of intoxicating beverages—and do not consider that the little of such luxuries which the very poor take are consumed in place of nourishing foods which have become too dear for them. Since the Middle Ages the tendency of agricultural produce has been towards increasing price, whilst luxuries have notably declined in relative value; what is more, agricultural luxuries, such as asparagus, seakale, &c., are relatively cheaper than were formerly the common vegetables, the potato only excepted. Yet the Free Trade School are perpetually parading the figures of import and consumption per head as if these settled the question as to the position of the labouring population, though report after report is at hand to show that hundreds of thousands or even millions of their countrymen are living under Free Trade close to the limit of starvation.*

Cheap food, under a rigid system of competition, is by no means an advantage to the labouring class by itself. That surely was proved for all time in the case of Ireland in 1847, and has since been made manifest in India but too often. Mr Francis A. Walker, the American, is a bourgeois economist at bottom, and reasons as if the present form of society were permanent, omitting the most important features in the historical antagonism of classes in the past as well as that antagonism which exists to-day; yet it seems to me

* That voluminous and shallow writer Mr Mongredien is a great offender in this respect. For him Free Trade is the be-all and end-all of human life, and the production of wealth, irrespective of its distribution, the great object of human existence. The publications of the Cobden Club have done much to stop the progress of free-trade in the United States, owing to the brutal frankness with which they champion the eternal supremacy of the capitalist class at the expense of the workers.

that in his criticism on Professor Rogers he hits the defect of our own middle-class school rather well. To quote M'Culloch first: "When the standard of natural or necessary wages is high—when wheat and beef, for example, form the principal part of the food of the labourer, and porter and beer the principal part of his drink—he can bear to retrench in a period of scarcity. Such a man has room to fall; he can resort to cheaper sorts of food—to barley, oats, rice, and potatoes. But he who is habitually fed on the cheapest food has nothing to resort to when deprived of it. Labourers placed in this situation are absolutely cut off from every resource. You may take from an Englishman,* but you cannot take from an Irishman. The latter is already so low he can fall no lower; he is placed on the very verge of existence; his wages being regulated by the price of potatoes will not buy wheat or barley or oats; and whenever, therefore, the supply of potatoes fails, it is next to impossible that he should escape falling a sacrifice to famine." In the same way Professor Rogers: "A community which subsists habitually on dear food is in a position of peculiar advantage when compared with another which lives on cheap food; one, for instance, which lives on wheat as contrasted with another which lives on rice and potatoes; and this quite apart from the prudence or incautiousness of the people. Two instances will illustrate this rule. The Irish famine of 1846 was due to the sudden disease which [illegible]ted the potato. It was equally severe in the northern [illegible] of Scotland, and particularly in the Western High- [illegible] its effects, as we all know, were terrible; but the [illegible] disease affected the same plant in England. That, [illegible]r, which was distress to the English was death to

* does not apply, as we have seen, to the agricultural labourer.

the Irish and the Highlanders—they had nothing else to fall back on; they subsisted on the cheapest food. Now when came a calamity like the potato disease to attack wheat in England, intolerable as the consequences would be, they would not be fatal."

Now this simply means of course that a high standard of life in food should be maintained. Ireland for years before the famine, during the famine, and after the famine, was exporting food to England, and the Irish, like the Highlanders, were driven to the lowest point of subsistence, because the landlords, owning absolutely the only available means of production, could drive them down to that point by law and then wash their hands of all responsibility. Unless the English labourer received charity in times of dearth on a large scale he too would suffer similarly. As Professor Walker points out, dear clothing affords a margin for purchase as well as dear food, and both theories assume that the food is got from somewhere in the event of total failure [illegible] and if famine comes. Does not the possibility of going down from dear to cheap clothing, from woollen say to cotton, or from silk to cotton, afford a margin just as truly as the substitution of cheap for dear food? If so, how does the advocacy of dear food for the people consist with the advocacy of the machinery which cheapens the clothing of the people? The economists who will not admit the wholesale supersession of human labour by cotton and woollen machinery in the early part of this century, and the consequent throwing out of employment of vast numbers of men and women to sink into pauperism and squalor, to be even a qualification of the advantage of introducing machinery to cheapen clothing, are unhesitating in their denunciation of cheap food. It appears to me that cheap food

just like cheap clothing ought to be, and but for the folly and wickedness of men, would be a blessing to the race."

The cheapening of all commodities, including food, by means of machinery and organisation of labour, ought indeed to be a blessing to the race. But the ignorance and want of combination among the workers, the rapacity and greed of the owners of the means of production, turn this very cheapness into a cause of depression by driving the real producers in many cases down to the lowest subsistence on which human life can be supported. No attempt even is made to make provision for bad seasons, either in regard to food or clothing. The old communal and village societies were, so far as can be ascertained, always from one to four years ahead of their consumption of food. To-day, if all mankind were properly fed and clothed in proportion to the heat or cold of the climates they inhabit, so as to maintain the highest standard of human vigour, it is probably an understatement to say that we are at least four years behind our consumption, and are steadily falling further and further into arrear, at the expense of the well-being of the human race in the present generation and of its vitality in generations to come. Leaving Great Britain aside, India and Ireland yearly drained of their food-supply or agricultural produce representing a possible food-supply, and whole tracts of virgin soil in America and the Colonies worked down to sterility to supply our non-producing classes at home, this alone is a sufficient condemnation of the wasteful and ruinous capitalist system which, based solely upon individual selfishness and the gratification of individual greed for profit, takes no thought for the morrow, nor has any regard whatever for the future of the human race.

Not long ago a typical middle-class journal summed up

the number of men who had died in England with personal property worth more than £250,000 in the ten years between 1872 and 1882. From this list it appears that seventeen persons died with over £1,000,000 a piece; fifty-six with upwards of £500,000 each; and one hundred and ninety-five with more than £250,000. According to the *Spectator*, the journal quoted, this is an increase of seventy per cent. on the millionaires of the previous decade; six per cent. on the demi-millionaires, and eighteen per cent. on the quarter-millionaires. But the fortunes between £100,000 and £250,000 have increased enormously. As these great fortunes are frequently combined in business with the smaller fortunes in the promotion and support of joint-stock companies and the like, that gradual accumulation of capital into larger and larger sums for purposes of production and distribution goes on more rapidly than the above figures would show. Capitalists who inherit, for instance, large fortunes, employ, as shareholders, more active, ambitious, or necessitous men to look after their business at a salary. Those managers of banks, of factories, of mining enterprises are in fact the persons who answer to the bailiffs of ancient Rome. No doubt there are still instances of individuals who have made large fortunes merely by the use of capital which they have themselves acquired. But the majority of the most successful of the direct superintendents of banking, or managing directors of business, receive salaries for their skill in organising other men's labour on behalf of those who lie by and receive the interest or profit on the capital which is thus handled.

Those, therefore, who contend that capitalists are paid because they organise production, or distribution, or credit, omit to consider that the real organisers or superintendents

are in ever-growing numbers salaried officials, as in the railways, the banks, the factories, &c., with a hierarchy of smaller salaried officials beneath them. There is no reason whatever why, even if such capacity for organisation must be paid at a higher rate than the ordinary worker, the workers should not through the State employ their own organisers, retaining that surplus-value for the entire community which the landlords and capitalists now absorb to themselves out of the surplus-value which the wage-slaves render. Karl Marx has pointed out that this very socialisation of capital where banks and railways are owned by many shareholders who employ salaried officials to secure them a profit, is in itself significant of the break-up of the middle-class system, though the competition among the corporations still goes on in a lessening degree; and the labourers are in no sense benefited, save in so far that, as a class, they come nearer and nearer to the final revolution and victory.*

What, then, is the present condition of the workers in our great cities? The general survey is plain enough. The wage-earners are split up into various grades; and as in agriculture the Cumberland, or Northumberland or Lowland hind receives 18s. or 20s. a week for labour on the land, against the 9s. or 11s. received by the labourer in Dorsetshire or Wiltshire, so in the city trades the skilled engineer, compositor, or coach-maker receives 30s., 35s., 40s. a week against the half of that sum paid to the unskilled hand. In agriculture, the superior labour-force exerted by the northern man, who gives more than the social average of labour in his day's work, owing to his higher standard of life, involves no loss to the farmer; in city industry the limitation of the number of apprentices in skilled trades and

* A further exposition of this will be given in the thirteenth chapter.

the cost of such apprenticeship in time and money, enable the skilled labourers to obtain a higher average wage than the so-called unskilled workers who, however, are just as necessary and in every sense as valuable to the community at large. As a result of this extra payment, unfortunately, there is a wide gap between the highly-paid artisan and his less fortunate brethren. Yet the circumstances are such that combination will be forced upon the workers for political ends in order to bring about, through politics, social results attainable in no other way.

Our anarchical system of production makes the position of the skilled artisans more insecure every day. They have become a nomadic class in all our great centres of industry; displacements constantly occur from one cause or another. In London, the working classes in consequence of change of employment, are estimated to change their place of abode once in two-and-a-half or three years, at great loss to themselves in every way. There is no organisation or order in all this. Even the effect of machinery in increasing the uncertainty of work is enhanced by the uncertainty due to the caprice or the incapacity to withstand competition of the masters. The labourers live in little short of social anarchy during ordinary times, whilst once in every ten years a serious industrial crisis comes, which inflicts the most grievous hardship upon hundreds of thousands of the people, from the highest-paid artisan to the rudest navvy. Thus, whereas under all the older forms of society a man who worked with his hands could reckon upon reasonable constancy of employment and fairly good living in the place was born, or where he settled, nowadays he has rance whatever, but must be ready to shift for y moment, owing to the operation of causes

which lie entirely outside his own individual control, or, as at present managed, outside the control of the producing class as a whole to which he belongs. Though trade unions are enabled in ordinary times to arrange work for their members and to provide satisfactory accommodation for them when moving from one seat of industry to another, they also are powerless against the great industrial crises or movements of trade, as witness the fearful misery wrought by transfer of shipbuilding from the Thames to the Clyde in 1866, the ruin of Coventry in 1860, and the fearful distress and depression throughout the iron and coal districts following upon a period of exceptional prosperity in 1876. General influences are at work which need a national, or rather an international arrangement to nullify. Such periods of enforced idleness as now occur in all trades bring down the average of wages seriously, and inevitably lower the physical power of the workers.

The average age of the producing class, after passing infancy, is, on the average, about one-half that of the upper and middle classes who live without work, the figures being approximately twenty-nine years for the workers, and over fifty for the well-to-do. The number of deaths of children is proportionate. This is only what might be expected from the social conditions in which the two strata of society respectively live. In the one case, insufficient food, bad lodging, indifferent clothing, overwork: on the other side, good food, healthy lodging, excellent raiment, and sufficient exercise. Doubtless there are habits which shorten life and bring on premature decay in both classes; but whereas the workers are driven into unwholesome lives, those of the luxurious classes who injure themselves do so of their own choice. Even with all

allowance made for excess, the respective length of life is as we see. Women of the working-class who live during pregnancy in such an atmosphere as they breathe in crowded courts, and with such scanty comforts as can be afforded, bring forth children under the worst possible conditions; and the children themselves, entering upon life in these unfortunate circumstances, have not even enough milk to give them strength. The review of the existing condition of artisans' dwellings given below from official reports is alone sufficient to account for the fact that whilst in one large district of Lambeth, inhabited entirely by workers, the average mortality is 62 per 1000, the average in St George's, Hanover Square, inhabited almost entirely by the well-to-do, is only 11 per 1000. There are districts in Liverpool and Manchester where the average death-rate is over 50 per 1000. Yet, in the regular health reports presented to the public, these deadly districts for the workers are necessarily lumped together in one general average.

It is not to be disputed that even if the laws already enacted were rigidly carried out, such insanitary dens would not be allowed to continue; but instance after instance could be given in which the most unwholesome hovels are owned by vestrymen, whose influence is exerted to prevent the law from being put in force. Not long since, when an exceptionally filthy den was burnt down in the east end of London, it was found to belong to an official specially responsible for uprooting such abuses. Complaint after complaint had been made, but nothing was done. The heads of some of the "noblest" families in the country own the land on which the foullest kennels in our great cities are situated, and take no steps whatever to improve them, or

to cause them to be improved. In these places, two, three, and four families pig together in houses which were originally built only to accommodate one. These "tenement houses" —and they are to be found in thousands in all our great industrial centres—are filled with people of what are called the "lowest class," and the description of the dwellers in cellars is as true to-day as it was forty, fifty, sixty years ago.

"Generally such buildings form part of a considerable neighbourhood or area which is for the most part under similar conditions, and has been so for many years, and the rents extracted from the poor are so considerable and profitable that there is, generally speaking, no probability of the buildings being voluntarily used in any other way. *In fact, the overcrowding produces high rents. The poorest class pay a higher rent in proportion to income than any other class in the community.*"* As a matter of fact, according to the return to the Trade Union Council they pay from one-fifth to one-third of their wages for rent. Moreover, the rents of the working class rooms are on the average considerably higher, cubic space for cubic space, than the residences of the rich, although the latter are well situated in fashionable localities, with a plentiful supply of good air, good water, and pleasant surroundings; whilst the former are utterly deficient in light and air, and the inmates frequently are obliged to put up with a most scanty and impure supply of water. Such are the happy results of supply and demand in the important matter of housing the producers of wealth in the richest country in the world at the latter half of the nineteenth century. What is worse, as has been shown by writer after writer, the very improvements in our great

* Charity Reform[illegible], No. 7, Dwellings of the Poor.

cities—improvements for the upper and middle classes, be it understood—result in more and more overcrowding and unhealthiness for the poor. A little has been done by Mr Torrens' and Sir R. Cross' Acts to remedy this state of things, but the excessive regard for vested interests even in the most abominable hovels, the cost of the acquisition of land, the permissive nature of the enactments, have rendered them almost nugatory in the very districts where changes were most imperatively needed. In cases where advantage was taken of these Acts, enormous sums have been paid to landowners and houseowners for land and property acquired, thus permanently saddling heavy charges upon the inhabitants for the rascality of a few.

In some towns no insanitary property can now be built under the bye-laws, though these are often evaded owing to the fact that the administration is in the hands of the class which thinks that to make profits out of other people is the one object of life. Speaking of London homes for the poor, the Memorial from the Trades Council presented to the House of Commons by Mr Powell points out that "thousands of poor women and men too of the hawker or small costermonger class, with and without young children, and earning not more than 10s. weekly, are compelled to pay 2s. 6d., 3s., or 3s. 6d. for single rooms of the most miserable description, or otherwise take refuge in cheap low lodging-houses, where inevitable contact with the dissolute and the vile surely and rapidly saps whatever degree of self-respect or respect for others previously existed."* And these dissolute and vile, whose very touch thus con-

s, how did they thus become degraded? Surely surroundings and miserable early associations

s' Dwellings Committee, Minutes of Evidence, p. 136.

with dirt, obscenity, and disease. But still, Mr Fawcett and Mr Thorold Rogers, Mr Henry Sidgwick and Mr Leonard Courtney, will tell us on their reputation as political economists that for the State, as the organised power of the working community, to step in to remedy such frightful anarchy would be a disturbance of all economical order.

The workers who see these things under their very eyes are on this question shaking themselves clear from their middle-class misleaders, for the Memorial goes on—"Much may be said about leaving these matters to the legitimate efforts of private enterprise, but experience has shown that the health of the people cannot be left longer to the tender mercies of speculative jerry-builders and greedy rack-renting house-farmers; and laudable, necessary, and worthy of support as private enterprise undoubtedly is, it is more than time that something were done to check *that* kind of enterprise which gives to the people coffin-homes, dooms its victims to lives of pain and broken health, fills the dispensaries and hospitals with endless cases of chest disease, compels grave-diggers to work overtime, and enhances the value of burial-grounds on the plea of inordinate demand." Leaving aside the rather overwrought rhetoric of the last few lines, this is a true and faithful account of the housing of the proletariat, and a plain statement by the aristocracy of labour of an infamous class wrong. The Memorial winds up—"The physical health of the people is the physical health and strength and wealth of the nation, and the State should do something more effectual than hitherto to ensure that a healthy mind shall inhabit a healthy body." To give a description of some of the places I myself have seen in our great industrial centr would sicken the reader. Vice, vermin, filth, debauc he foullest kind carried on and

openly discussed. In some districts such a thing as decency or modesty is absolutely impossible so long as such conditions are maintained and even encouraged by the dominant class.*

Speaking of Glasgow, Mr Bright, the hero of the Free Trade laissez-faire school, said in 1883 that in that wealthy city, where prosperity—for the capitalists—has so enormously increased since 1846, no fewer than forty-one out of every hundred families live in a single room; and that, in addition to these forty-one, thirty-seven families out of every hundred live in two rooms. Such figures give to any one who will consider for a moment a clearer view of the miserable condition of existence than could be given by the most forcible word-painting. It is the same everywhere, though all cities do not show quite the same proportions. Educate children and return them to such social conditions, instruct them just sufficiently to be able to appreciate their surroundings and to read of the wealth which they create for others, and the class struggle must be brought closer and closer each day. And well that it should be, well that the shallow sciolists, who talk as if all economy were wrapped up in keeping the people poor and destitute that others may be lazy and rich, should learn that in the evolution of mankind we have come to the period when the wage-slaves demand in their turn a higher and a better physical, mental, and social condition for themselves and

* Since this chapter was in type, a pamphlet, entitled "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London," has been published by the Congregational ministers who formed a Commission of Inquiry. All the horrors l can be found recorded in official reports; and our capi- n no more to ministers than they did to doctors. Fear l argument with them. But the pamphlet should be o still doubt.

their children. The most impotent conclusions of the House of Commons Committee in the report on the evidence referred to above tend to make this housing question even more important than it was before. Whilst admitting that matters are as bad as they can be, it is still left optional with the municipalities whether they shall take steps to house the workers or not. Evidently nothing but organised agitation on the part of the proletariat will compel the middle-class to give up their cherished supply and demand theories in favour of a better system.*

Meanwhile those who suffer fall by the wayside, and others step up to take their places in the misery of life. Take for instance the evidence of the Rev. Mr Huleatt, of St John's, Bethnal Green, no prejudiced writer. He says of some of the workers of the East End of London: "They continue with their progeny working half-time when trade is a little brisk, and when trade is slack fighting a terrible battle to keep body and soul together to escape from starvation and the workhouse, which they dread almost as much as starvation; for 'the house' means death to every earthly hope that the respectable poor cherish. The actual result is that, like in some parts of China, there are in East London numbers whose normal state is semi-starvation, not merely the profligate and the drunken"—as Mr Samuel Morley, Mr Samuel Smith, and other professional philanthropists would have us believe—"but sober, steady people, who would be glad to do work if they could get it. We keep quiet and say nothing about it; but in reality there is as

* Mr Fawcett, for instance, who grinds down the Post-office officials to the lowest possible point in wages, and exacts ever-increasing extra work from the St[illegible]nts, has lately declared against all collectivist effort. See *Macm[illegible]e* for July 1[illegible]

sore and grievous want in East London as in any of those parts of Ireland where such a cry has been raised; and the worst of it is that those under-fed people continue to have children, who, having been brought up in the same state of semi-starvation, have no chance in the present condition of growing up into strong, healthy men and women."

They are being starved and stunted, in fact, with wealth all around them. If any one wishes to hire the lowest class of labour in the world, the board-men who parade the streets with placards affixed to them, what does he find? That hundreds, nay, even thousands, of such poor creatures are ready to undertake the job at from 1s. to 1s. 6d. a day. Consider the prostitution again throughout our city population, from the mistress of the aristocrat and plutocrat, who rivals her aristocratic and plutocratic sisters in laces and luxury, to the miserable, drunken harlot of the rookeries, or the still more pitiable case of the starving seamstress or factory girl, driven to sell herself to the first buyer for a few shillings or a few pence. There are thousands of such women produced by our present system every year apart from the girls who from their earliest infancy are brought up in conditions which render purity almost impossible. Case after case has lately appeared in the police court where girls have been proved to be earning from 4s. to 7s. a week for the most exhausting toil from week's end to week's end. One large establishment, which is supposed to pay rather better than the rest, gives out cravats to its regular "sweaters" at the rate of 1s. 1½d. the dozen, the sweater making them up and providing his own silk for . &c. These cravats are then made up by the sewing d. a dozen. Now, working thirteen hours a day tion with others for six days in the week, a

skilled seamstress can just earn 12s. a week in good times. What can she save when food and house-rent are paid? what can she do when bad times come? She has her choice between the streets and the workhouse. And there are thousands worse off.

The factory inspectors never fail to denounce the system of slow torture which is going on, the medical authorities, true as of old to the cause of the people, lift up their voices against such anarchy which produces moral, mental, and physical degradation, but all to no purpose. Evidence of the horrors which go on may be found in every direction. Men and women of the luxurious classes in London or in Liverpool, in Manchester, Glasgow, Sheffield, Birmingham, Bradford, in every great centre of population, have but to apply to the health officers, the policemen, the out-surgeons at the hospitals, or the workhouse officials, to find out speedily what manner of political economy it is with which they are contented.

In almost every direction things are getting worse instead of better. For instance, a few years ago some truly benevolent persons established a hospital to deal with young girls affected with diseases arising out of prostitution. Whilst the numbers of these poor creatures applying for attention have steadily and rapidly increased, the age of the applicants have as steadily and rapidly fallen. Mere children constantly appear with the clearest evidence that the life which has brought them there is habitual to them. To give the horrible details is impossible, yet such putrefaction as this can scarcely mine below without bringing fearful physical retribution on coming generations; and the most squeamish may even in our own day have social problems forced home to them which now they keep a whole staff of

paid agents to ward off from between the wind and their gentility.

But I will now take the wages and actual conditions of work in some of the great trades, in order that we may see how far that great improvement has taken place actually—relatively no one claims an improvement—in the face of the vast accumulation which has been going on. To begin with, a recent discussion in the *Manchester Guardian* has proved conclusively that in proportion to the labour which they do owing to the increased rapidity of the machinery and the consequently enhanced intensity of labour which they exert, the workers in cotton mills are not paid more in proportion, nor even so much, as they were thirty years ago.* The manufacturer, Mr Fielden, who argued that wages had increased enormously, was evidently surprised to find the truth. No doubt great advances have been made as already recounted in the conditions of work, by the reduction of hours for women and children, and the better ventilation of the larger mills; but matters are still very bad even in this respect. The hot close unhealthy atmosphere, the dust which flies about, are most injurious, whilst the adulterating processes of sizing and steaming are carried on at the expense of the health of the workers. This is specially noticeable of course in the smaller mills, where "anœmia, debility, diarrhœa, and other formidable symptoms of pulmonary mischief are the result." † A woman employed as a "canminder," it may be mentioned here, has to move cans

* Whereas in the spinning of medium or coarse corsets forty years ago, the mule stretches were from 1700 to 1800 per day of twelve hours, they now average 2161 per day of ten hours, so that considerably more *attention and movement* is required on the part of the piecers.

† G. Phillips Bevan, "Textile Industries," p. 15. This gentleman is a sworn champion of the capitalists. That is why I quote him.

weighing 16 to 18 lbs. more than 900 times a day, the work being unremitting. In the spinning room the heat is very great, and the amount of walking done in the day about a sixth more than at the time of Lord Shaftesbury's calculations.*

Bearing in mind, however, the talk we sometimes hear of the enormous wages now earned by the cotton operatives, consider the following table of weekly earnings in a Manchester spinning factory a little while ago :—

Spinning Department.	s.	d.
Scutching tenters,	13	6
Strippers,	22	0
Grinders,	23	0
Card-tenters,	11	0
Overlookers,	30	0
Draw-frame tenters,	14	3
Roving,	15	6
Jack,	13	0
Spinners,	20	4
„ piecers,	13	6
„ creelers,	13	6
Overlookers,	38	0

Doubling Department.	s.	d.
Cop winders,	10	6
Clear,	12	0
Warp,	12	0
Doublers,	11	0
„ doffers,	3	0
„ bobbin carriers,	3	0
Reelers,	12	0
Makers up,	27	0
Warpers,	45	0
Roller coverers,	12	6

It will be observed that there are only two classes of workers, very small in number, who get what would be called high wages in this whole mill. The wages are lower to-day, and no allowance is made for slack time or sickness. Now, when house-rent is paid for, when clothing has been obtained, when some account is taken of the cost of tending children and the house, how much is left out of such wages for really good wholesome nourishment for all members of the family? The fact is, the race degenerates under such food and such work. This fact is proved beyond doubt. The surgeons who replied to the

* See Chapter v., p. 168; also note to Chapter iv.

questions put seven or eight years ago are all of one mind. One attributes the deterioration chiefly to the neglect of the family duties by the mother, another to "the intemperate habits of the people, the innutritious food and the excessive use of tobacco by the very young.* A third writes, "The physical strength suffers much in factories from confined heated atmosphere, loaded with fine cotton fibres, flinty sand, and cutaneous exhalations,"—the old story of fifty and sixty years ago retold—"the number of gas-lights, each light destroying oxygen equal to one man; transitions from the mills and the irregular temperature to their own dwellings; diet and drinks adapted to a heated employment, and stimulants to soothe an excited nervous tension; vision always on the nerve; perception and volition from the nature of their work always in action. But unfortunately drink, stimulants, and mental excitement are resorted to, and want, improvidence, poor houses, and bad food tell against healthy offspring. No doubt factory physique is not good, but it is made worse by factory associates of vice and iniquity." Bad food and over-work, miserable housing, and bad education force the people to gin and debauchery. Once more I ask what sort of economy, what sort of statesmanship, what sort of humanity is that which leaves the workers in one of our most important industries in such a condition of degeneracy as this, because to interfere or to rouse the workers to protect themselves might mean socialism? I grant that something has been done by law; but how much remains to do?

The wages in the flax, linen, and jute industry are somewhat lower than in the cotton factories, and the employment is very unhealthy. The room where the tow is carded is

* Factory Reports, 1875.

specially injurious, being filled with noisome dust which lies thick on the clothes of the workers in spite of heavy ventilating fans. Speaking of the mills in Belfast, Dr Purdon says, "Nearly three-fifths of those that die annually in this trade are taken off by diseases of the respiratory organs. In the preparing rooms the death-rate from chest affections is exceedingly high, being 31 per 1000, and amongst the hecklers the deaths usually amount to 11·1 per 1000, amongst the weavers to 9 per 1000. In wet spinning the children often get their clothes wet with the spray that comes off from the spindles, and on coming out of the hot room with their clothes damp in the evening, it brings on bronchial affection." * The average life of the flax-workers is of course proportionately short, and the capitalist works him into the pauper grave-yard at a higher rate of profit to himself. In the woollen and shoddy and kindred industries there are exceedingly unhealthy departments, notwithstanding the improvements which have been made of late years, and the tendency of factory legislation in the right direction. The laws have been good, but owing to the pernicious cheese-paring of the middle-class government, enough factory inspectors have not been appointed.† The saving of a few hundreds a year in the Budget always outweighs the saving of a few thousands of lives in the factories. Consequently we still read that in this woollen and shoddy industry the work is often carried on in conditions dangerous to health. In the shoddy mills the dust which arises when the old worn-out cloths are being torn to pieces is highly unwhole-

* Factory and Workshops Commission, 1875.

† In the session of 1 William Harcourt answering Mr Henry Broadhurst's request Factory Inspectors should be appointed, said he did not know money was to come from to pay them.

some. The process is called "devilling," and the result to the workers is a permanent catarrh and irritation of the mucous membrane known as "shoddy fever." Let anyone imagine going day after day for ten hours into an atmosphere such as that arising from the tearing up of the worst description of garments, with the shoddy fever already upon him or her, for the privilege of earning the noble recompense of from 10s. to 25s. a week according to the class of labour. The wool-sorting is better paid, wool-sorters earning from 24s. to 30s. a week; but in the majority of cases they run the risk of their health, or even of a painful and lingering death from blood-poisoning, in order to gain this magnificent revenue.

Even where great precautions are taken frightful mischiefs arise. A wool-sorter, employed by Messrs Titus Salt & Co., gave the following evidence:—He had suffered from illness from sorting bags of fleeces from animals which had died before they were sheared—technically called "fallen fleeces," which had a very bad smell.* "On each occasion of his illness he was engaged on these offensive bags; and the symptoms of his illness were similar in each case. He was subject to cold and shivering and vomiting, followed by insensibility. He had had no eruptions from the skin; but the nails left his fingers on the last attack. He attributed their decay to the sorting of the material on which he was engaged. . . . . He had known several other workmen who suffered from illness, and he had stayed with them during portions of their illness. He believed ten or more of these men had died, and many others like himself ...ed and had returned to work. He had known ... where a man left his work, and was dead on

* "Factory Reports," 1880, p. 32.

the following morning from this cause. His name was Semple Fox; and another of these men, Robert Naylor, was also at work one day and died the next." Wages, 24s. to 30s. a week at the outside. And all this takes place in one of the greatest firms in the trade; what, therefore, must have been the state of things in the smaller factories? "At factories at Glasgow and Leicester, in which noxious hair and wool are constantly used, fatal cases had occurred, and illnesses had been endured which were attributable to the operation of sorting." * Let us recall once again that the average "lease of life" of these poor fellows is less than half that of their well-to-do neighbours, and then, if we can, thank the benevolent capitalists for providing them work in this deadly fashion. In the same report from which these quotations are made will be found "the horrible manner" in which workers in phosphorus suffer, how the jaw becomes ulcerated, "and in some cases the jaw-bone is destroyed." †

The silk industry is in much the same condition as the cotton in regard to the methods of work and the wages paid, though the Spitalfields silk trade has never recovered from its long period of depression, and those who were dependent upon it sank into the most miserable state. In Macclesfield, Derby, and Nottingham the wages vary somewhat, but in good years adult women earn from 8s. 6d. to 12s. for a week's work of sixty hours, and men 18s. to 24s., some few get 30s. for the same. In all these averages no allowance is made for sickness or slack time, and the rents are frequently heavy. But it is scarcely necessary to go through all the different trades. In every one we find the same facts—wages even for the highes[illegible] of workers only just sufficient to enab[illegible] to live [illegible]mfort, so long as strength,

* P. 37. † P. 15.

eyesight, or dexterity last, but with an ever-increasing strain upon vitality, and a certainty of early death. Of the state of the milliners' girls in the shops in London, of the slaves to the sweaters in the east, I have spoken elsewhere.* Here, perhaps, even more clearly than in the factories can be seen the hideous effect of the laws of supply and demand on people working for a bare subsistence wage. All individuality, all hope of improvement is crushed out of these unfortunates by the fearful monotony of the work, the starvation wages, and the poisonous atmosphere in which the work is carried on. Of the dressmakers Mr Inspector Gerald says—"I know of no large class of female workers whose vital interests are so entirely neglected, and who labour under such disadvantageous conditions (the nature of their work itself being so perfectly free from any necessarily concomitant evils), as the unlucky victims of the dressmaking industry. Of the thousands of young and delicate girls who are engaged in trying to earn a bare subsistence in a deleterious atmosphere, no one can tell how many go down in the struggle. No statistics can be formed of the percentage of deaths, of enfeebled constitutions, of the amount of disease engendered in the first instance by the deadly atmosphere of the workrooms in second and third class establishments devoted to the dressmaking and ladies' clothing trade in the west end of London."† In addition, the inspector gives the following table of some of the work dens he visited.

(1) 112 cubic feet per employée.
(2) 180 ,, ,,
(3) 102 ,, ,,
) 80 ,, ,,
94 ,, ,,

" chapter ii. Full details in Report of 1881.

Similar cases were common, though the minimum space allowed in factories is 250 cubic feet per employée, and in this case no deduction is made for gas jets. How can we wonder that unfortunate girls doomed to life-long slavery in such "black holes" as these should furnish perpetual recruits to the ranks of prostitution, ready to accept any unknown ills rather than continue in such hideous misery as this? Throughout England, wherever cheap millinery and cheap tailoring are provided, there will be found similar frightful oppression. What dreadful overwork goes on among the shop-assistants is also well known. Girls frequently stand for thirteen hours a day, no seats being provided for them, with the result, according to repeated medical evidence, that all sorts of diseases of the spine, womb, and joints are brought on. Yet the advocates of women's suffrage and the rights of women are for leaving that freedom of contract untouched which brings about these abominations.

Taking other fields of work, such as the iron industry, the coal mining industry, the potteries, and brick-fields, in each and all we find the same state of things. Wages high here and there, but on the average very low for hard, excessive, and unwholesome labour. Recent revelations of the nail-trade, for instance, show that women work in that trade for fourteen hours a day to gain a pittance of 6s. a week.* In the iron trade, as a whole, wages are somewhat higher, but the men are subject to periods of enforced idleness, such as those which fell upon the Cleveland district a few years ago, reducing the people to complete destitution, whilst the ordinary labour is extremely heavy.† Recent meetings of

* "The nailers during this year have been brought to extreme want owing to a drop of thirty per cent since August they being considered at that time

† The truck system still 1880.

the coal-miners in the North of England and in Wales, clearly prove that the tales which flippant conservative publicists sometimes see fit to invent about the luxurious lives of such men are not only untrue but absurd. The average earnings of a collier are under £1 a week. And then read of the work that has to be done for this pittance, bearing in mind the fact that the whole trade is carried on, even with all the precautions and mines regulations Acts, at the risk of the men's lives. The pitman has to labour hour after hour in a close packed position which is liable to render him crook-backed and lame, the air is in many cases bad, and his "lease of life" is necessarily short.* Yet it is skilled labour, and no man not brought up to the trade could earn a living at it. When the trade was in its most flourishing condition, men earned, at the outside, £2 a week on the average, though the profits of the capitalists were enormous, and Lord Dudley alone took £1,000,000 in one year in royalties. In the brick and pottery works heavy unwholesome work is rather the rule. Girls carry 11 tons of clay a day to and fro for 10s. to 14s. a week, and the state of the people in some districts is that of savages, so miserable are the social conditions in which they are brought up. Here is an official description. "A most barbarous, semi-civilized, ignorant set. Men and boys look like Red-Indians; the sand used in brickmaking being burned red, and with which their bodies are covered, working bareheaded, barefooted, with

* Dr Lee, the health officer for Manchester, states, 15th January 1875, that the average "lease of life" for the well-to-do class is thirty-eight years, whilst that of the workers is only seventeen; in [illegible] the average is thirty-five for the well-to-do, and only the workers. Thus showing that in these two great lustry, the average duration of life is, as in London, r the easy classes as for the labouring portion of the

exposed breasts, and with wild looks. Drinking all day Sunday; Monday, Tuesday, dog-fighting and man-fighting. They resume work on Wednesday, when the poor little unfortunates are made to toil away, stamping, and carrying, and pressing a good fortnight's work into three or four days."

Well may my friend, Mr Henry George, point to our modern civilisation and tell us that the barbarians of the British Empire, the Goths, the Huns, the Vandals of our wage-slave civilisation are in our midst.

Only lately a famous fugleman of the capitalist class, Professor Leone Levi, has been examining into the condition of another important body of men, our fishermen, the back-bone, in years gone by, of our navy and commercial marine. It is the fashion to say that fishermen are thriftless; that they make good wages and drink them away. Mr Levi now tells us that there are in round figures, 130,000 men engaged in this industry, 70,000 regularly, 60,000 irregularly. Those who work regularly get about 20s. a week, but when slack times are taken into account they do not earn on the average more than 12s. a week.* What wonder that the percentage of paupers among them is high? What room is there for thrift on such wages? The work that these men do, and the risks that they run to gain these wages, can be judged of by anyone who has ever been much at our seaside resorts or has sailed along our coasts in even moderate weather in a well-found craft. There can

* Mr Mulhall estimates, in terrible contrast with these figures, that each fisherman earns an average net value of £300 a year, after all allowances are made for the cost of distribution and waste. The difference, therefore, between 12s. a week and £6 a week is taken by the various profitmongers who stand between the fisherman and the consumer. The worker is, in fact, legally robbed of £5, 8s. a week.

scarcely be a harder life, and though, on the whole, it is not an unhealthy one, the danger to the men is great.

One other instance, and enough has been said to show the existing anarchy. Nothing can be more important than that the making of bread should be carried on with proper care and cleanliness. In the country this is now reasonably assured; but the report about London shows how matters are conducted, with the underselling which goes on. The inspector himself says: "It is undeniable that many of the bakehouses in my London district were unfit for their purpose, and some are so now, being underground, dark, ill ventilated, damp, very small, unduly hot, often filled with vapour, cobwebs and dust ornamenting the walls, the holes and corners of these converted dwelling-houses not cleaned out. Sinks were found without traps and uncovered in the bakehouse; the lime-washing done in an imperfect manner; water-closets in the bakehouses, some without water supply or ventilation, the smell from them not agreeable; the refuse was swept under the troughs, where it lay until a large quantity was collected; this most objectionable practice, which was universal, I am gradually beating down, for I am credibly informed that the said refuse when acted upon by damp and heat generates insects innumerable. . . . I have seen liquid manure from a stable running under sacks of flour, and the imperfect drain of a privy overflowing on the bakehouse floor. I have also seen an open drain two feet square, into which liquid from adjoining premises flowed, and over which tins of buns were laid to cool." The inspector, Mr Lakeman, mildly adds also: "I consider it objectionable to smoke tobacco from pipes and cigarettes during the kneading of dough. I do not think it cleanly for men, semi-nude, with profuse

perspiration dripping down their shoulders and arms, to lean over troughs and work up bread in such a state; nor do I believe that wholesome bread can be made out of unclean utensils." This trade is now chiefly in the hands of Germans who are hideously overworked, and adulteration of the bread is common. As to the effect of adulteration of our cotton and other goods upon our foreign trade it is unnecessary to say anything here: enough that our workers are injured for the temporary profit of the capitalist class, whilst the very basis of our external commerce is sapped by their shortsighted greed.

But the deterioration of the physique of the factory workers calls for more elaborate evidence. This is fortunately or unfortunately at hand in the Factory Report for 1875, already quoted, in the form of distinct answers from the certifying surgeons. In 1870, Mr Ferguson, certifying surgeon at Bolton-le-Moors, said at a public meeting at Bolton: "I am perfectly satisfied, from close observation during the last ten years in a situation which gave me the best opportunities of judging, that the children of the mill population were steadily year by year, for their age, getting smaller and physically less capable of doing their work. If you ask me how that is, I will tell you. *In the first place, it is owing in a great extent to the intemperate habits of the parents transmitting feeble constitutions to the children,* and in the next, to the mistaken manner in which the mill people fed their children. They brought them up on tea and coffee instead of more substantial food. As an example, during the last month in the great Bolton district I have had to reject as many as nineteen children, simply because they had not the strength and development required by the Factory Act; and these numbers are

steadily increasing year by year. . . . . What is to become of the factory population if this physical degeneration goes on?" *

This evidence was confirmed by Mr Ferguson some years later, and he said before the Factory and Workshops Commission, "the result of my observations was, and is, that the number of children physically unfit goes on increasing year by year." In answer to Mr Robert Baker's circular on this most vital subject, the majority of certifying surgeons agreed with Mr Ferguson. Mr Leech of Heywood's opinion has already been given. Mr Thomas Bolt of Bury says: "I am compelled to admit that in my experience the children employed in the factories are, as a class, and compared with the children in other employments, of a diminished stature and deteriorated physique. I admit also there is something injurious in the employment, as blooming children fresh from the agricultural districts become pale-looking after being at work a few weeks." †

Mr Eames of Stoneclough, since appointed certifying surgeon, "remarked a gradual deterioration in the condition of children both in stature and physique." This he attributes to unwholesome food, the very early period after confinement when mothers leave their children and return to work in the mills, and other causes.‡ Mr Hugh Robinson of Preston says that "a considerable proportion of the children presented to me for examination are not only stunted in growth but generally deficient in physical strength and development." He attributes this to hereditary weakwing to fathers and mothers having worked too he greed of the parents in overworking the chil-

99. † 1875, p. 102. ‡ Report, 1882, p. 32.

dren when weak and ill; overwork generally—"factories and workshops, whose rate of wages depends on the amount of work turned out, get as much out of their hands as they can without the slightest regard to their health or strength;" * unsatisfactory condition of sanitary arrangements; insufficiency of food and improper food; numbers of pregnant women who work in the factory "almost up to the very day of their confinement, and return again to work almost immediately after their delivery," which cannot but be detrimental to the child both before and after. Dr Brown of Preston has found "stature of children diminished and general physique deteriorated." This arises from neglect and unhealthy conditions of life and work. "In many of the factories the privies are at the end of the rooms where the operatives work, and in consequence have to breathe an atmosphere which is filled with fetid exhalations." Mr William Aspinall of Haslingden agrees as to deterioration. "The moral, physical, and intellectual condition of the children is totally ignored." Mr F. H. Walmsley of Manchester is of opinion that the stature of the children is diminished and the general physique deteriorated; he further speaks of the "low stature and enfeebled condition of children." Mr T. C. Law of Padiham holds the children have deteriorated, "and very perceptibly so." In the silk industries, Mr J. H. Ritchie says: "I give it as my opinion that there is a steady deterioration going on in the general physique of factory children."

In the Staffordshire Potteries, Dr Arlidge is "convinced that the stature and general physique of the children employed in the potteries are considerably below the standard in relation to their ages. It is not possible to cite any one

* P. 104.

special cause of the condition alluded to; many causes concur. For instance, hereditary influences are accountable for much. The generation of the children by diseased and dissolute parents must be largely credited with ill-shapen weakly offspring. But what probably more seriously still affects the growth and physique of children is the mode of feeding in early infancy and childhood. The breast milk is denied to many infants in a greater or less degree by mothers engaged in labour at factories or given to drunkenness and dissipation. In place of it improper and insufficient food is supplied, of which bread soaked in water is the commonest form." * Dr Arlidge's whole statement is indeed horrible. The whole conditions of life at home and in the factory tend to produce "a population of stunted and feeble individuals." In summing up, Mr Baker says that the deterioration and degeneracy of "physique amongst factory children appears to be sufficiently authenticated to be no longer doubtful." And this deterioration and degeneracy is still going on in this year 1883, and practically no steps are taken to remedy a system which is sapping the very life of the nation.

Now I beg any man, no matter to what class he belongs, to look rapidly again over the official facts and figures given in this chapter and the last, and then ask himself whether as an Englishman he can wish to perpetuate a system which results in such misery and degradation for the workers? Some there are who will not be convinced by official reports, or who believe perhaps that these things are in the nature of the case. Examine them yourselves. Take a very simple test. Rise early in any great industrial city and watch the working men and women going to their

* P. 111.

work between five and six o'clock in the morning; note their appearance, their height, their weight, their general bearing; wait four or five hours, you can go to bed again and have breakfast, and then go out and consider the middle and upper middle class as they come into their various businesses. The contrast is but too sad and too conclusive. As an American writer has well put it, "Let those who make light of the effects of the monotony of factory work and call it easy, try the effect of sitting down for ten hours at a stretch to make short parallel strokes with a pen on a sheet of white paper. Twelve hours fatiguing bodily labour may be borne in one occupation without physical deterioration, while ten hours may be killing in another. Compare the exertions of the domestic servant with the worker of the sewing machine. The one is constantly on the move, and the same set of nerves are seldom subjected to any particular strain for any length of time, while the other, like the machine she attends to, must ever remain in the same position. She must watch every one of the hundred and twenty or more stitches that are put in per minute; her eyes are intensely and constantly fixed upon a line, her hands and feet must move with the regularity of any piece of mechanism; a turning of the eye, a slip of the hand or foot spoils the work. The same set of nerves are constantly strained and overstrained, while the rest of the body is enfeebled, perhaps paralysed by inaction." The factory hands and others engaged in similar employments are, as I have said before, slaves to the machine which uses them up for the profit of the capitalist class. How completely this is the case may be judged from the recorded fact that constant work, which means over-work, is [illegible] to life than actual privation. Du[illegible]

Manchester and Lancashire; and when work stopped in the east-end of London in 1869, the death-rate there at once sank to the level of that of the more comfortable classes.*

What then are we to say? that the capitalist system of production to-day, as ever since it first obtained power, is the curse of every man and woman who labours, and that the political economists who maintain it and elucidate its advantages are either wilfully ignorant or studiously blind. Want, vice, disease, death brood over the wage-earners of town and country alike: over-work and under-feeding produce their inevitable effects. The never-ceasing complaints that we cannot get men for our army should be traced to their true cause—the degeneration of the national stamina under this crushing capitalist domination. How can men grow up fit to fight for the country when from childhood to manhood they scarcely obtain a full and wholesome meal? Nay, is a country which so crushes them worth fighting for at all? Education itself means but too often the exhaustion of underfed starvelings, who want food more than they do instruction.† So long as the people thought that all this misery was inevitable, so long might they possibly bow down in silence and quiet. Now that they learn each day how they suffer and are oppressed in order that others may wax fat on the fruits of their labour, is it probable that they will eternally submit? When revolution is prepared in the womb of society, he is a fool indeed who thinks he can

* Eccarius. "The Hours of Labour," p. 17.

† The Archbishop of Canterbury lately called public attention to the fact that children at the East End of London were getting only 2½d. making a gross (144) match boxes. "There is not much civilisation" he added. No, there is not; even though one of the employers of little creatures could afford to spend £2500 on a statue of

prevent it from manifesting itself in open and declared shape. That very decay of Parliamentarism and so-called representative government which is now apparent to all helps on and is in itself indicative of the coming change. Politics, it cannot be too often repeated, are but the outcome and manifestation of the form of production and the class antagonism below. No doubt the form of government reacts in part upon the production, as religious ideas in time react in the same way. But the conflict between the socialised system of production and the individualist system of exchange has in England reached a most critical point. Though the workers of all nations must of necessity combine in order to bring about a new and better system, England is the country where the economical evolution has reached its highest development, and where the reconstruction must consequently begin.

It is a noble rivalry in which all nations may fitly take a part. The day when an abstract theorist will be a practical statesman may never come; the day when the practical statesman can dispense with being a well-grounded theorist is gone by already. Nowhere is this more true than in our own country. For to sum up our present position—

First. In no civilised country in the world is there such a monopoly of land as in Great Britain.

Second. In no country are capital, machinery, credit, and the means of production generally so concentrated in the hands of a class.

Third. In no country is there such a complete social separation between classes.

Fourth. In no country is the contrast between the excessive wealth and lux of the few and the grinding and degrading poverty any so striking.

Fifth. In no country is the machinery of government so entirely in the hands of the non-producing classes, or are the people so cajoled out of voting power and due representation.

Sixth. In no country are the people so dependent for their necessary food on sources of supply thousands of miles away.

Seventh. In no country is it so difficult for a man to rise out of the wage-earning class.

Eighth. In no country is justice so dear or its administration so completely in the hands of the non-producing classes who make the laws.*

Here then, are a series of indisputable facts, to which may be added the truth that the revolutionary character of our present system of production already noted is becoming more marked each day. Electricity threatens to subvert entirely the whole of our processes in every department of industry; education, imperfect as it is, teaches our workers to appreciate their surroundings, and circumstances force them to combine. No change can be for the worse in their condition. Let, then, all classes take account of the inevitable antagonism, and endeavour to help those who produce the wealth of the country to enter upon their inheritance without bloodshed, to the glory of England and to the benefit of all. Those who urge that class ought not be set against class, belong themselves to that very class which is producing and intensifying the antagonism they hypocritically deplore. Let the capitalists and their hangers-on, the landowners, strive with the workers for a change, and England may set an example of

Coming Revolution in England," in *The North American* r, 1882.

peaceful reconstruction to the world. But at present there is very little sign of any such wise and far-sighted action on the part of the classes in possession; history teaches us that only resolute combination on the part of the oppressed classes has ever gained them anything. It is sad that the men in possession should be thus blind to their own best interests, and refuse to recognise facts in the society around them which point steadily in one direction. But with the misery due to the existing system, it is impossible to hold any terms. That has reached a point where national decrepitude and decay must inevitably follow, unless wholesale changes are immediately brought about. These changes are being steadily prepared all the while by the very oppression and misery themselves, as well as by the new forces placed at the disposal of humanity. It is to the control of these forces by the whole community that we must look for improvement in the near future.



CHAPTER XI.

THE POOR LAWS.

THE Poor Laws, as has been well said, form and have formed for three hundred years a Socialist basis to English society. It has been in practice recognised throughout this long period that in sickness and in age men and women of the working or any other class could obtain shelter, food, and medicine at the cost of the community, that people out of employment should be maintained, and that destitute children should be taken care of, and to a certain extent educated. Provision for the helpless, food for the able-bodied out of work; these were the two sides to the English poor-law system, supplemented as it was by the efforts of private charity. That the system itself was often harshly and sometimes cruelly administered, that the parochial relief and law of settlement produced much injustice in many ways, and that at its best the whole arrangement is but a poor substitute for a proper organisation of labour by the producing class, all these drawbacks in nowise alter the fact that our poor laws are distinctly socialist in character, and founded upon the principle that the community has duties towards all its members, no matter how unthrifty or even how absolutely wasteful they may have been as individuals. Of the causes

up to vagrancy and permanent pauperism after

p of the peasant-proprietary of the fifteenth

ef account has been given. Commerce and

manufactures helped to intensify the evil effects of the seizure of the land. In a rather obscure passage even Eden seems to have felt his way to this conclusion when he says, "Manufacturers, although they added to the capital stock of the nation, yet by creating a necessity for free hands, and consequently enabling men to make use of the most valuable of all property, their own industry, subjected those who were in any way incapacitated from availing themselves of that fund to the miserable alternative of starving independently. Without the most distant idea therefore of disparaging the numberless benefits derived to this country from manufactures and commerce, the result of this investigation seems to lead to the inevitable conclusion that manufactures and commerce are the true parents of our national poor." * But they were merely portions of the general growth of wealth, which crushed the many for the sake of the few, though unquestionably the necessity for "free" hands, that is to say, for a reserve of labour, owing to the continued expansion and contraction of the capitalist system, accounts for the permanence of pauperism in the midst of increasing riches.

It is not here necessary to go through the various statutes dealing with the relief of the poor before and after the famous Statute 43 Eliz. cap. 2, but the view taken of the poor in the eighteenth century, under aristocratic rule, and before the complete victory of middle-class economy, is well worthy of consideration. During the whole of the eighteenth century, even in the years immediately succeeding the formation of workhouses in 1723—which were set on foot owing to the increasing number of idlers who were maintained by the country—it was generally admitted by statesmen that the

* Eden, vol. i. p. 61.

poor had a right to be well fed at the public expense. The result was that, though in many parishes there was a superfluity of labour for the work to be had, wages did not fall. Pitt, Fox, and Whitbread, at the end of the century, freely admitted that a man's wages should be proportionate not to the work he did, but to the wants of himself and his family.* Thus a single man ought not to be paid so much as a man with a family, a man with a small family so much as a man with a large one, and any deficiency should be made up out of the poor-rate. Pitt himself, speaking in opposition to Mr Whitbread's motion in 1796, when the rise in the prices of the necessaries of life had produced a terrible effect upon the poor, whilst he denounced the Laws of Settlement, "which prevented the workman from going to that market where he could dispose of his industry to the greatest advantage, and the capitalist from employing the person who was qualified to procure him the best return for his advances. These laws had at once increased the burdens of the poor, and taken from the collective resources of the State, to supply wants which their operation had occasioned, and to alleviate a poverty which they tended to perpetuate," whilst also he supported the unrestricted competition of the labour-market, which Mr Whitbread's motion was directed to restrain, yet admitted that relief should be granted in proportion to the number of the children, that friendly societies should be encouraged by the State, and that industrial schools should be established. Mr Pitt was also in favour of advancing sums of money to persons who still possessed property. The prohibition of such relief whilst property remains he stigmatises as a "degrading condition."

* "To each according to his wants: from each according to his abilities."—St Simon.

Although, therefore, the opinion that the poor were only not criminal was rapidly growing even then among a certain class, the more humane view still held its ground in Parliament, and, indeed, had passed beyond what is reasonable. It is the very foundation of all socialism, that no able-bodied person should be allowed to live upon the fruits of the labour of others without work, and this is as true of the pauper as of the sybarite. But by an Act passed in 1782, called Gilbert's Act, the able-bodied were not obliged to go into the workhouse, and the guardians of the poor were called upon to find work for all able-bodied people who applied for it near their own homes, and to make up any deficiency out of the rates. Later, in 1815, by East's Act, the workhouse test, which had been imposed by the 9th of George I., was altogether removed, and justices were empowered to make allowances in money to people at their own homes. Now there was every possible reason for this relaxation of the stringency of the old administration where it had been stringent. The period from 1782, the year of the passing of Gilbert's Act, to 1815, the year in which East's Act became law, was the most fearful period which the poor of England had passed through since the sixteenth century. The rise in the price of provisions owing to the war, the displacement of labour, alike in agriculture and in industry, by the introduction of improved machinery, the discharge of sailors and soldiers in 1815 after the long war, all combined to bring about a state of things for the poor which called for immediate intervention on the part of the community at large in favour of the necessitous. Common humanity dictated that all ordinary restrictions should be set aside in the face of such dire misery as fell upon the working people during those thirty or forty years, and that

some effort should be made to deal with the frightful industrial anarchy which prevailed. Even as it was, the condition of the poor was deplorable in every respect, though the country as a whole was getting richer.

Thornton admits that in consequence of the richer class of men who took to farming with large capital, renting one or two thousand acres apiece, great improvements were made. By these capitalist farmers, in fact, "more experience and more scientific implements and processes were introduced, and the productiveness of the soil was probably increased, but at the same time a saving of labour was effected which rendered the services of a smaller number of persons necessary." * Thus in agriculture, where machinery had least influence, the increase of production due to improved methods absolutely took the bread out of men's mouths and increased the number of the necessitous. It was surely the duty of the Government to counteract as far as possible the mischievous effects of this great industrial revolution, and of the war upon the condition of the workers in town and country, no matter how much the ideas of the rising middle-class economy might be outraged thereby.

Unfortunately, the relief was given at first in the worst possible way. No attempt was made to organise labour; the only object was temporarily to relieve distress. In 1796 the law was passed which entitled all persons with large families to grants in aid of wages, and a direct premium was placed upon early and prolific marriages without any clear view of what the system would lead to. No wonder that economists like Mr Fawcett and Mr Thornton, who think the individual should at all times shift for him-

* Thornton, "Over-population," p. 217.

self, and that large families among the producing class are the chief cause of all our economical and social evils, should write strongly about what followed. "Thenceforward a poor man might lay aside all thought for to-morrow," writes Mr Thornton, "and might solace himself with the belief that whatever family he might bring around him he should be maintained in the position which he actually occupied; nay, it might almost be said that a positive bounty was placed on procreation, for as the more children a man had the more money he received, a large family might be regarded as a source of wealth. Even this was not all. If any resolute bachelor were found capable of withstanding every temptation to marriage, and anxious to gain a livelihood by other means than by begetting a pauper progeny, it often happened that no choice was offered to him. If married and single men were applying for work at the same time, the farmers sagely argued that as the former would be the heaviest burden on the poor-rates, it would be most politic to enable them to earn something for themselves, and the rejected bachelor found that he would not be allowed to maintain himself unless he first got a wife and children for the parish to maintain." That, of course, is funny enough.

Mr Fawcett's denunciations of the whole arrangement are also worth quoting. "The extent to which the industrial classes were demoralised by these relaxations of the Poor Law soon became evident. The most pernicious influence was exerted not only upon the poor but upon their employers; every agency which could most powerfully promote pauperism had been brought into operation; men were virtually told that no amount of recklessness, self-indulgence, or improvidence would in the slightest degree affect their

claim to be supported at other people's expense. If they married when they had no reasonable chance of being able to maintain a family, they were treated as if they had performed a meritorious act, for the more children they had the greater was the amount of relief they obtained. All the most evident teachings of common sense were set at naught; labour was bribed to remain in localities where it was not wanted; and it was prevented passing to those districts where there was a demand for it. Thus, if wages in any parish were below what it was thought would provide a reasonable maintenance, the local authorities were empowered to grant an allowance in aid of wages. These evils were aggravated by various enactments known under the general name of the Laws of Settlement, which were passed with a view of hindering labourers from leaving the localities in which they were born. The allowance system and the Laws of Settlement, though acting in very different ways, combined to impede the natural flow of labour. However great a surplus of labour there might be in any locality, the employed had no inducement to leave it as long as their wages were made up to the average amounts by grants from the rates. The employer, not caring about or understanding ulterior consequences, was apparently interested in keeping a supply of surplus labour about him; it produced a low rate of wages, and he was virtually able to put his hand into the pockets of the neighbouring ratepayers to make up the deficiency to those whom he employed."

The results of such a series of blunders as this could not fail to be injurious, especially by keeping the people in districts where their services were not wanted, and in paying from the parish funds higher wages than an independent

man could earn in the same neighbourhood—a case which was not uncommon. There was also no reason why a woman should receive more for a child born out of marriage, than for a child born in wedlock. It is further perfectly true that encouragement was given to the increase of population, whilst no effort was made to provide special labour for the surplus, owing to the remissness of the overseers and guardians. But whilst we may admit, to the fullest extent, the drawbacks to this indiscriminate granting of relief in aid of wages, are ready to allow that forcing pauper labour on farmers was an error, and can recognise, as clearly as any middle-class economist, the mischiefs involved in the Law of Settlement and in local rating, it is necessary to point out that the total amount of the poor-rates for England and Wales in 1831 was not much above £7,000,000, as against £6,000,000 in 1810, though the population had increased during the twenty-one years from just over 10,000,000 in 1810, to nearly 14,000,000 in 1831; the actual increase being 3,700,000, much of which was due to immigration. But at this very time the wealth of the country was increasing more rapidly than ever, the profits of manufacture and trade astonished Europe, and even the men who made them. "The aggregate wealth of the country increased faster than ever," says Thornton.* What nonsense then is it for Mr Fawcett to declare that "England was brought nearer to the brink of ruin by the old Poor Law than she ever was by a hostile army." Of course, as a hostile army never did bring us to the "brink of ruin," the illustration is not a very happy one; but it is quite clear from what follows that, in Mr Fawcett's judgment, the old Poor Law would have meant utter ruin if the system had been con-

* P. 226.

tinued. "It was demonstrated by the experience gained previous to the year 1834, that if due restrictions are not imposed, it is impossible for a country long to fulfil the obligation to give relief to all applicants; the fund required for such a purpose would soon absorb the whole produce raised from the land, and would require a larger amount than is represented by the entire annual income of the nation."

This, I say, is nonsense; no such experience was ever gained. What was needed was a better organisation of labour in return for State or parish assistance, in order to relieve the congestion of labour and the undue pressure of the rates in particular districts. The supporters of the new Poor Law conveniently overlook the fact that by the Act of 59 George III. c. 12, the churchwardens and overseers in each parish were empowered to hire or purchase 25 acres of land on which to employ the poor; and that by the 1 and 2 William IV. c. 2, this amount was increased to 50 acres in each parish. Here, obviously, was the beginning of that communal or State employment, which, in proper hands, might have led to the greatest improvements. But by the Act of 1834 all such wise tentative legislation was swept entirely away. The idea that poverty was due to overpopulation was accepted as beyond all cavil or dispute, though the fact that wealth was increasing in a far greater ratio than population was manifest to all the world.

A clique of economical fanatics got hold of the machine of legislation and drove it completely over the interests of the mass of the people and the scruples of the more sensitive of the well-to-do. Men like Malthus and Chalmers, and Ricardo, and James Mill argued that there

ought to be no Poor Law at all. This may easily be admitted if all have equal rights in the country, and the State, as the representative of the whole community, undertakes the organisation of labour and the control of fresh inventions and machines, either directly or through local administrators. But to have no Poor Law at all in a country where all the means of production are at the disposal of the wealthy, and the workers may be thrown on to the streets at a day's notice from no fault whatever of their own, must mean either starvation for thousands and tens of thousands, an enormous increase of wasteful private charity and public begging, or a bloody insurrection, led probably by the more thoughtful of the well-to-do class themselves. No Poor Law therefore seemed too strong a measure even to the pitiless class which obtained predominance after the Reform Bill of 1832.

Holding, however, that all poverty was due not to the greed of the upper and middle classes, but to "the improvidence, the indolence, and the self-indulgence" of the producing class, Parliament set to work to establish fresh workhouses—"bastiles," they were called by the poor—all over the country; to reduce out-door relief—which, properly administered, can alone help a man through a bad period without absolute ruin, or enable him to seek work in another locality—to the lowest possible point; and to force everyone they could into these new workhouses, where the sexes were separated. No one can read the records of this legislation, and the evidence on which it is based, without seeing clearly that the economists who got the law passed and the statesmen who passed it, had persuaded themselves that a poor man was *primâ facie* little short of a criminal if he could not support himself, or that his parents

had been criminal in bringing him into the world, and that therefore "the workhouse test" ought to be rigidly enforced. No attempt was made on their side to analyse the complicated society which had grown up owing to the great industrial revolution of the end of the eighteenth century; and those who, like Owen and Cobbett and Sadler, pointed out the real state of the case, were set down as foolish enthusiasts or factious agitators. Not content with reforming the abuses of the system, which might easily have been done by repeating the Laws of Settlement, by taking advantage of the powers given to acquire land with a view to employing the people upon it, and by founding a system of equitable rating, the promoters of the new Poor Law accepted the so-called Malthusian theories in their fullest meaning, and based their whole action upon the assumption that increase of population was the chief cause of the mischief. It is true that the very people who argued thus, somewhat inconsistently pointed to the enclosure of commons, to the monopoly of the soil, and to the excessive concentration of wealth in few hands, as likewise tending to produce poverty. Nevertheless, the views of the Malthusian school were chiefly instrumental in bringing about the change in 1834, and are accepted more or less completely by the leading English economists of the bourgeois school to-day. On this point Mill, Fawcett, and Rogers, Walker and Sidgwick are at one. According to them, the tendency of population, if freed from restraint, is to increase in a higher ratio than the means of subsistence.

But Mr Sidgwick, by giving up in part at least the doctrine of "diminishing returns" to more and more labour expended, to my mind gives up the whole theory. For if, as already stated, the opinion of skilled agriculturists, such

as Sir James Caird, Sir John Lawes, Lord Leicester, Mr Boyd Kinnear, and others, is that at least twice the quantity of food could be profitably grown in England to-day that is now grown, how are we to limit the powers of man in the near future? If one person working on the soil will feed twenty or even ten people to-day, surely with improved machinery, increased knowledge of artificial manures, utilisation of sewage, and improved feeding of animals, combined with judicious use of co-operative labour, far greater results may be obtained in the future, which would more than counterbalance any probable increase of population. In England, at any rate, the production of wealth as a whole has increased much faster than the population since the beginning of this century.

But it is contended that if men and women married at the age they felt inclined to do so, were not in want of means of subsistence, and were protected against war and preventible diseases, the population of Europe would double itself in every twenty or thirty years. What right have we to assume that even this would be so in conditions that have never been tried? What we know is, that all over the world those people who can marry when they feel inclined to do so, and are not in want of the means of subsistence, are less prolific than their poorer compatriots. It is the same with man as with animals. Plentiful food is by no means necessarily a stimulus to population, and I am myself of opinion that in a community where all were well fed, well clothed, well housed, and well educated, the average increase of population would be much more on a level with that of the upper and middle classes in Europe and America, which notoriously increase very slowly, than with that of the

poor who, despite the heavy death-rate of the children, increase very fast. In hypothetical conditions, we can only reason from the nearest approach to those conditions which we see around us.

Predictions of economists are proverbially fallacious in matters of population. One of the principal authorities, reasoning from Ireland, declared in 1823 that within fifty years France would be the greatest pauper warren in Europe. During those fifty years the population of the country has scarcely increased, and at the end of the period she astonished Europe by the ease with which she paid an enormous indemnity to a foreign conqueror. The small properties told in favour of restriction of population rather than of its increase, yet wealth was being accumulated all the time. No doubt the followers of Malthus may argue that this was due to what they call "the preventive check." But the voluntary preventive check followed and did not precede the great social and political revolution. Further, even in France the relative over-population has made itself most seriously felt, in spite of the increasing wealth; and the poverty of the small peasant proprietors crushed down under the weight of taxation and debt, the miserable condition of the workers in many of the French cities, show clearly that a stationary population may develope a very poor class as well as an increasing population, side by side with rapidly-growing wealth. The condition of the workers in Paris, Lyons, Rouen, Marseilles, or Roubaix in periods of crisis and depression is even worse than that of the same class in England. In Western Germany, on the other hand, small properties have not checked the increase of population, and from no country has there been a greater or more continuous emigration, at the same time that the numbers at

home have risen. Yet both in Germany and in France many of the small cultivators, as the reports from our consuls show, are wretchedly poor, live on miserable food, and seem going from bad to worse, owing to American competition and other causes. In the one country, small properties apparently bring about small families, in the other, large families.

Thus the law of the increase of population is very obscure, and beyond the probable fact that poverty is favourable to generation, we have nothing much to go upon. How, then, can the enthusiasts for the new Poor Law base a whole system of economy—for that is what it comes to—on this hypothetical law of the tendency of population to increase beyond the means of subsistence? It is a remarkable instance of the complete incapacity of men who are brought up with certain set theories, to cast them aside and think for themselves. The attempt made to apply Darwin's theories on the struggle for life among animals to man is quite beside the point. Man is the only animal who deliberately modifies nature on a large scale, and increases the amount of his own food. To my mind, the Malthusian theory in the present condition of population on the planet, and of human civilisation among the progressive races, is utterly misleading and foolish. Such cases as Ireland and India merely prove that where mankind has, from any cause, been brought down to a very low standard of life, there until famine and disease begin to do their work population does increase very rapidly. In England, as we have seen, although not more than one-fourth of the people are useful producers, wealth has been increasing much faster than population. It is a better distribution alike of labour and the results of labour that is needed, not a deliberate

attempt to curtail the numbers of the producers, or suggestions as to limitation of relief.

The new Poor Law, however, went upon the strict principle that poverty is due to over-breeding among the workers, and steps were taken first to force the necessitous into the workhouses, and then, by separating the sexes, to prevent them from bringing children into the world; though those children, properly educated and trained, would become most useful citizens. It is strange indeed that men who pride themselves upon their rigid scientific statistical method should in this particular matter proceed in a wholly unscientific metaphysical manner, proclaiming as true a tendency which, among the well-to-do of our existing society, does not exist, which, therefore, may be entirely changed by a new order of things, and which cannot be worth consideration, even if true, for some ages, among progressive peoples.

The recommendation of continence to fathers and mothers who have to support and bring up their own children is quite another matter. No one, I judge, would dispute for a moment that in many cases a man and woman who have no children may in our present individualistic, competitive, capitalist society come off better than a married couple who have several children. But economists who argue in that way ought logically to urge that the workers should not marry, or at any rate have children, at all; and then the problem of subsistence would become a problem indeed, unless some of the idlers themselves turned workers. In short, the modern bourgeois economists, whilst frequently
enting the inequalities of wealth, and the sad poverty of
ny, overlook the class robbery and monopoly of
, which creates and keeps up a plentiful supply

of paupers; and refuse to see that in the more civilised countries the class antagonism can only be settled in one of two ways, either by still worse slavery, or by a complete enfranchisement of the workers. In either case conditions of life would be so changed that, even if we had—what we have not—a trustworthy theory of population to-day, it would be wholly inapplicable to-morrow. Once more I repeat that, speaking of the population at large, it is absurd to talk of an excess of hands in countries where wealth is increasing in a higher ratio than the numbers of the inhabitants, as is the case in every country in Western Europe and in the United States of America. Whether the Poor Law should be administered in this way or that, ought, therefore, to be considered without any reference whatever to this over-population fallacy. Needless to add that, were labour and distribution organised for the benefit of all, there would be only one side to the relief—the obligation upon the community to provide for those who are too young, too old, or too sickly to labour. Able-bodied pauperism would, under such circumstances, be unknown.*

At present, however, we are dealing with the Poor Law as it is, and with proposals to do away with or remedy its defects. Enough has been seen in the course of this book to show that the Poor Law was to a large extent forced upon the possessing classes by revolution and threat of revolution. It is in effect a safety-valve for the high pressure of the competitive system, and has possibly staved off downright rebellion in this island at critical times. But

* It is strange that, until very lately at any rate, Malthus was far better known than William Godwin. Yet the latter was in every respect the superior thinker and writer. As the middle-class school of thought fades, some of our forgotten worthies will be put in their right place.

the right to relief has always seemed very debasing to a certain class of minds, who are by no means inclined, nevertheless, to give up those sacred rights of property which, of necessity, produce the poverty that calls for relief. One precious scheme of a kind which is thought calculated to remove pauperism, brought forward by a clergyman, Mr Lewery Blackley, has actually found acceptance among economists, who themselves deplore the petty wages of the workers, and was meant to apply, in the first instance, to the worst paid class of all—the agricultural labourers. Troubled by the sad poverty of these people, and their almost inevitable drifting into the workhouse in old age, it is proposed that the labourers should insure themselves against sickness and old age by stinting themselves of food or raiment at the most critical period of their whole life. Of course, the contention is, that as all classes would be "compelled" to insure, and the class which is specially liable to pauperism spends a certain amount—too much perhaps—upon beer, no injustice would be done. In return for a compulsory payment of £10 before reaching the age of twenty-one, every insurer would be entitled to the sum of 8s. a week in case of sickness or incompetence before the age of seventy, and 4s. a week permanently after the age of seventy. This fund, so obtained by compulsion from all classes, the State is to manage.

Now we all know well that even as it is there is a great deal of thrift among the very poor, that they contrive out of their small wages to pay surprising amounts to friendly societies and burial clubs. But when a system of compulsory State insurance is proposed, let it at least be one worth having. Accumulated wealth is not due in our present society to thrift, but to the fact that one class has obtained

the means of making continuous profit out of the labour of another class. Let, then, the reverend gentleman and those who work with him first obtain for the producers the right to a fair share of the labour-value they produce by means of State organisation, and then compulsory insurance is a necessary part of the functions and duties of the State; as necessary as education, or postal arrangements, or organisation of transport. In short, what we have to-day is a rough and rude method of compelling the rich to provide subsistence and a refuge in old age for men and women who have worked themselves into sickness and premature debility for their profit. Grant that this assurance of support is in some sense harmful, can anything be more monstrous than that the State—which at present is merely the organised force of the well-to-do class—should force insurance upon all by compelling the young hind with some nine or ten or at most twelve shillings a week to pay the same sum as the young lordling at Oxford or Cambridge with perhaps £10 a week for which he never did a stroke of work?

That a well-meaning parson should bring forward such a plan is perhaps not very surprising, for to his mind Christianity itself is based upon class distinctions, and servility for the multitude is the very essence of his creed; but that well-read economists like Mr Henry Sidgwick and Mr Foxwell should take up the idea at the end of the nineteenth century and champion it as a means for elevating the working classes, is only evidence that they themselves are unable to clear their minds of that bourgeois cant which is as injurious to thought as are any theological prejudices to logic. Men will argue as if the poor child born in a cellar in Drury

Lane and brought up too often with insufficient food and under bad sanitary conditions is really a free independent individual and not almost certainly doomed for life as a wage-slave to the possessing class, it is impossible for them to deal adequately with this important question of national insurance, or indeed with the removal of pauperism in any way.

Fortunately the working classes, ignorant as they still are, can see through such suggestions for their regeneration as those which call upon them to vote for compulsory insurance out of their meagre wages. Much as they detest "the House," while yet availing themselves of it, deficient as they are in power of combination and political force, they are able to understand that that is a calculating hypocrisy which leads an array of capitalists and middle-class economists to counsel thrift, thrift ever more thrift to the only portion of the community which produces wealth, whilst taking no steps whatever to change the conditions of society that embrute and degrade the people about whose welfare they pretend to be deeply in earnest.

What, after all, is the total amount paid by the rich towards the support of the poor? Not £8,000,000, or about ¾ per cent. upon the total income of the country, and comparatively little of this goes to the real work it is paid to perform. The proportion which the working class at large takes of that total income is less than one quarter, and yet there is this outcry. The truth, of course, is that on any theory of justice the poor are entitled to a far better provision in old age and sickness than that which [illegible] get, though under our jobbing middle-class [illegible]dministration even the £8,000,000 is to a [illegible] wasted. That State assistance is neces[illegible]ng is absurd. State help in return for

labour rendered is no more degrading than State employment in any other form; and this will become more and more clear as the State itself becomes only the organised force of the whole people free from class greed or class domination. Meantime, the true remedy for pauperism is in precisely the opposite direction to that in which Mr Blackley seeks it, namely, in good food, education, combination, and a serious effort to sink individual advantage for the good of all. Personal thrift, though better than extravagance, is but a low form of selfishness. Where there is plenty for all there is no need for stinting at any age, least of all by the producing class.

Leaving aside, then, a proposal for compulsory insurance in our present state of society as merely a scheme, however well meant, to relieve the rich from rates at the expense of the poor, it is worth while to consider how the Poor Law is administered now. It would, of course, be foolish to deny that there is a certain proportion of our people who claim support from the parish when they have little need for it, or rather when they might earn enough for themselves if they tried. But this is after all a very small minority. All admit that the poor as a whole are very slow to apply for help or to go into the workhouse. Thousands live in our great cities from hand to mouth in squalor, misery, and disease, who rarely or never apply for aid: they prefer to trust to chance employment or to the help of those who are luckier than themselves. Yet the whole Poor Law is administered as if [illegible]kulkers were the most numerous body of all. The [illegible] application for relief unpleasant, and [illegible] the success. Yet if the lands and [illegible] for the poor been kept as rig[illegible] estate

property of the nobility and gentry have been kept for them; if even a moderate part of the belongings of the Church had been devoted to the ends to which the abbots and monks of old applied them so long as they held power; if, to come to more recent times, the commons had been preserved untouched, the system of allotments carried out, and the methods prior to 1834 maintained, the amount available for poor relief would be many times the £8,000,000 which are at present spent in that way. But the new Poor Law took it for granted that to be poor was very nearly a crime, and the economists of to-day better the instructions of their teachers of the last generation. At present this view is held more stanchly than ever. Not only is out-door relief being curtailed as much as possible—and Mr Fawcett and Mr Courtney are in favour of doing away with it altogether—but it is given in a more grudging spirit than ever.

Now, of course, there is a great deal to be said against a lavish administration of out-door relief from the standpoint taken by the middle-class economists. Their object is to increase the severity of the "test" of poverty, to force men and women to admit that they have no hope of life outside before they come into the workhouse, and thus to reduce the rates and "foster independence." But surely our arrangements are none too lax as it is. Certainly the relief given is not excessive in the individual cases any more than it is a heavy proportion of the national income altogether. But it is too much for the hide-bound theorists of the so-called Radical party. Full of the gall of

rness, their one idea is to cut out what little

a relieving officer.

ecent ordinances on this subject pauperism

has decreased—of that there is no doubt—at the very time when poverty has increased. That the numbers of paupers has diminished means therefore only that the rigid methods now adopted keep the people from obtaining relief. The effect may be a little different from what the supporters of these methods imagine; for there are ideas abroad among the people as to the disposal of the fruits of their labour, which will ere long take outward expression if at the very time when the number of unemployed is increasing the penalties of poverty are made more severe.* But take the ordinary work of the workhouse and the casual ward even now. What difference is there between the pauper and the criminal? Both are set as a rule to useless and degrading tasks, no effort is made for the most part to render the work attractive or beneficial. To pick oakum is as hard, and at the same time as miserable, a task as human beings can be set to.† Breaking stones can now be so easily done by machinery that it is a waste of human force to employ men at such work. These are the customary duties for men: laundry work for women. The whole arrangements too, both for men and women, assume an inferiority and a slavishness on the part of those who are driven to ask for aid. Workhouses vary, but as a general rule the management of these places is such, that there is no wonder that the people regard them with dread. The casual wards are worse than the parts kept for permanent inmates. The abuses of these dens have

* A wide experience among the poor of London and the country enables me to say confidently that never, within my memory, was there such bitter class feeling among the needy as there is to-day.

† Recent cases in the Police-Courts have shown what disgusting, useless work this oakum-picking is, and what tyranny is practised towards weak old men in the workhouses.

often been described. So dirty are they, so inconvenient and harmful are the arrangements, alike in regard to time of leaving in the morning and the work exacted, and such is the misery of the whole surroundings, that men or women of respectable character forced to tramp in search of work avoid them as far as possible, though to sleep under a hay-stack is an offence, and to beg for a bit of bread a crime.

Yet our existing methods of production directly foster and increase what economists euphemistically call the "mobility of labour." That is to say men and women are driven by causes beyond their control to roam in search of work. Not long since, alarmed at the numbers of such people going about the country, a Radical professor (Mr Bryce) and a Conservative plutocrat (Mr Pell) made common cause, and passed an Act through the House of Commons, which was accepted by the House of Lords, in imitation of the old barbarous legislation against sturdy beggars. Not a word was said about the causes which led to this persistent movement of the "fringe of labour," not an attempt was made to examine into their condition or to provide them with steady work. It was taken for granted that a constant vagrant must be a criminal, and as such he is now treated. Of course, vagrancy like pauperism has been much reduced by this means. But does any one suppose the poor victims of political economy are better off or more contented? Not at all: they are merely crushed into deeper and deeper misery, from which it will be well for plutocrats and professors alike if they do not rise as a horrible spectre of rapine and bloodshed before their oppressors. In short, the whole of our present Poor Law administration is based upon the notion that the people themselves

and not society are to blame for the poverty, thriftlessness, and vagrancy into which so many of the workers are driven, and they are treated accordingly.

Pauperism in our modern sense can only be put an end to finally by securing every one who works enough to live upon in health, and this can again only be brought about by the collective ownership of the means of production. But smaller attempts have been made to improve the condition of the paupers in our workhouses, both the able-bodied and the sickly, by giving them work on wares which are useful to themselves and others, and paying them a portion of the results of their sale. This is, of course, in itself a step in the right direction, being far better for the poor inmates in every respect than wearing away their days upon hopeless tasks, or being employed upon work for which they get no pay, no matter how thoroughly they do it—as sweeping the streets, and the like. Pauper labour, by the way, in such cases, is invariably dear labour in proportion to the amount spent in keep, lodging, clothing, &c. The effect, therefore, of this new system upon the paupers is very pleasing wherever it has been tried. Men and women who were before dull and lifeless, looking forward with despair to a pauper's grave, gain new hope, take an interest in the work, and rapidly improve in vigour and intelligence. Moreover, the ratepayers are to a certain extent relieved from payment, and that also is for them a charming feature of the plan. Wherever tried, paupers, guardians, and ratepayers have all been satisfied. But outside, the irony of our existing society at once speaks out. Those with whom the paupers—secure at least of shelter, warmth, f[illegible]nd bed—enter into competition, look upon the mat[illegible] a very different point

of view. They find themselves undersold in their own trade by these pauper or prison productions, and are very soon forced down into the needy class themselves. It is a distinct upset of the market, which no skill or industry on their part can right any more than they could the disturbance due to the introduction of a new machine. Thus the paupers are benefited, and the hard-working men outside suffer seriously.

An interesting feature in the experiment is, that the whole scheme now being tried in the East End of London and elsewhere was brought forward as a deliberate policy for all the workhouses in the kingdom at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and passed the House of Commons by a large majority "amid loud cheers." In 1704 Sir Humphrey Mackworth carried his bill in favour of starting parochial manufactures. The object of the bill was to start a factory in each parish at which the poor should be set to work on profitable articles. Daniel Defoe saw at once how this would work against the labourers competing outside, and in his pamphlet entitled, "Giving Alms no Charity," expressed himself thus: "Suppose, now, a workhouse for the employment of poor children sets them to spinning of worsted. For every skein of worsted these poor children spin there must be a skein the less spun by some poor person or family that spun it before; suppose the manufacture of making baize to be erected in Bishopsgate Street, unless the makers of these baize can find out at the same time a trade or consumption for more baize than were ever made before. for every piece so made in London there must be a

'ess made at Colchester . . . it is only trans-

ture from Colchester to London, and taking

the mouths of the poor of Essex to put it

into the mouths of the poor of Middlesex." Defoe's opinion was that the business of the State is not to find employment for the poor but to compel the people to work for the employing class. Mackworth's bill was due to a long series of proposals outside the House of Commons for the formation of parish factories, and probably the famous John Bellers' "College of Industry" produced a direct effect at that particular time. But the bill was rejected by the House of Lords on the same grounds as Defoe placed his objections.

Precisely what Defoe said in 1704 is going on now. Trades such as basket-making, mat-making, and so forth are being crushed out by workhouse and prison competition. Yet this is clearly not the last word on the subject. We cannot, even in the present anarchical state of society, keep human beings, driven into poverty by no fault of their own, tearing their hands over oakum or uselessly pottering at jobs in which they have no interest and for which they get little or no reward, when by working at really useful articles they benefit themselves and the whole community. Nor, on the other hand, is competition with outside workers on such terms reasonable. First, then, there is no reason whatever for the harsh administration of the Poor Law favoured by the present school of economists: secondly, it would be easy, even assuming our present competitive system generally to go on, to organise the labour of town and country workhouses so that they might be mutually dependent, and supply one another without coming on to the market and ruining other poor folk by their low-priced competition.

There is little doubt, indeed, that from this side the organisation of labour would have gradually developed had the course recommended by so[illegible] wiser econom[illegible] eighteenth century been [illegible]ing i[illegible]

for people working on the land to support those who provide them with clothes from factories. Granted able-bodied paupers to the number of so many thousands yearly in town and country, and nothing but the prejudices born of our competitive system prevents us from enabling them to support one another in happiness and contentment. Admitting that the continual displacement of workers by machinery, and the return of a severe industrial crisis at least once in every ten years forces people to wander as vagrants in search of work, and again only the narrow-minded views bred by bourgeois bigotry prevent us from ordering casual wards, so that the State or the parish may supply the place which the guilds of old time filled towards the journeymen, and the trade unions partially take now. That there are some incorrigible idlers is no reason why the whole system of relief should be based upon the assumption that all who need help are of the same character. Good education brings up workers, not idlers; and the habit of work once acquired, mere idling becomes wearisome to the great majority of mankind. Such considerations as these, I repeat, are entirely left aside by men who begin by taking for granted that poverty is due to over-population, and then contend that the poverty so engendered is made worse by thriftlessness and drink, for which the individual, and, in no sense, society, is responsible. A thorough change in our social and political system is, therefore, needed, even to bring about so small a reform as the better administration of the Poor Laws.

The fact is, that in this as in other directions, the period of middle-class rule is at an end, and we are in a period ion to the supremacy of the entire community, in ability of all to labour shall be fully recognised. hial system under the control of the parson,

the squire, or the local attorney has been tried and found utterly wanting. Yet local and municipal matters are of greater importance than they ever were. In 1880 the total yield of local taxation was £31,000,000, and the total revenue £53,000,000, the loans reaching the figure of nearly £140,000,000. Yet we are told by a writer who publishes under the auspices of the Cobden Club, and cannot certainly be accused of any socialist tendencies, that "the parochial system, as it exists in English country parishes, is singularly ill-calculated to supply any democratic training for self-government, or to promote the recognition of common interests and mutual duties in village communities." In fact, the common-sense of the people educated in public free schools, and accustomed from their earliest youth to debate their own affairs and those of the country at large with a view to their best administration, is absolutely needed in order to combine local management with centralised design. So in the great towns and municipalities, where educated democracy alone can help to put down jobbery and lead the way to thorough reorganisation.

Political, economical, and social questions really become identical when we have to consider the welfare of the whole community and not the advantages of a class. The Poor Law is, of course, but a part, though a most important part, of a series of institutions which embrace school-boards, sanitary arrangements, water supply, and should cover hospitals, erection of dwellings, and organisation of labour. To quote again from Mr George Brodrick, the writer cited above. "But it must not be forgotten that of all classes in the community the working classes are most directly interested in local government, and above all, in sanitary regulation, upon which their he[illegible]d domestic comfort so vitally

depend. Yet most members of the working classes are disabled, for want of a ratepaying qualification, from voting either for town councillors in boroughs, or for vestrymen in London, or for guardians of the poor."*

Thus we are brought to the same conclusion by every route, that only through the working classes themselves taking control of the administration, and looking after the management of the wealth which they produce, can any permanent reform be looked for. The Poor Law has lasted for just three hundred years, and only now that the wealthy are trying to do away with it by one plan or another, are the workers slowly awakening to the truth that the sums spent in relieving the miserable, come really, in the first instance, from the labour of those very unfortunates, in common with the other members of their class; that, therefore, to look upon such relief merely from the ratepayers' point of view, or to reckon it as charity and almsgiving, is to forget the truth that labour is the source of all wealth, and has the right, if it had the power, to take all instead of resting content with a pittance.

The Poor Laws, then, whether left to be administered by the county, the parish, the municipality, the union, or taken, as would be best, under the direct control of the State, form, if looked at without middle-class prejudice, a valuable starting-point in connection with other State departments, for that organisation of labour combined with relief of the distressed, and provision for the sick and aged, which, under full control by universal suffrage, will supplant our present competitive system. No doubt the tendency in t at the moment is all the other way. But the resulting from the supremacy of middle-class

* Cobden Club. "Local Taxation," p. 66.

ideas will as surely lead to their overthrow as the feudal system was broken at the time of its greatest apparent power. It is true that the bourgeois, like the baron, will not disappear all at once; but in the one case as in the other, the new development is coming from the class most despised by the ruling body—from the residuum, the mob, the proletariat, whom ratepayers and vestrymen, middle-class economists and capitalist statesmen cannot speak of without sneering and contempt. The very success which has attended the training and feeding of the little street arabs on board well-managed vessels shows how the moment any real attempt is made at organisation the growing physical deterioration is checked. Paupers breed paupers as the weakly breed the weakly. In a community such as ours the proportion of both would become infinitesimal in the course of two or three generations of good feeding and good education. The Poor Laws which grew up as a necessity in the cruel system of unrestrained middle-class competition will become useless in the gradually evolving period of working co-operation for all.



CHAPTER XII.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MOVEMENTS.

At the time of the great national upheavals of 1848-49, when French, Germans, Italians, Hungarians, and Croats were all fighting their way, as they hoped, to some sort of republic, or more less complete independence and unity, there were some in every country who longed and strove for a deeper and more thorough revolution than any which could be the result of mere republican or national risings. The Socialist party in France which, from Babœuf to Blanqui and Louis Blanc, from Rousseau to Saint Simon and Fourier, had never lacked men of action as well as writers and thinkers to champion the cause, scarcely grasped the full idea of such international action, or at any rate the few who did so were unable to make their views prevail at the critical time. In 1848, 10,000 Frenchmen fell fighting in the streets of Paris for Socialist principles, but there was no general movement outside in their support, and the attempt failed. Notwithstanding the anarchist Proudhon's famous phrase, "la proprieté c'est le vol," notwithstanding Lamennais' powerful denunciations of the capitalist class from a very different point of view, in spite of all the efforts of Louis Blanc, Ledru Rollin, and Victor Hugo, coupled with the more
nd determined agitation of the noble, self-sacrificing
in the face of the fact that the workers of Paris,

ie greatness of this noble enthusiast will be better appre-

Lyons, and Marseilles were thoroughly imbued with the communistic teaching, Socialism failed in France because the time had not fully come for success, because the attempts were organised on no scientific basis, and because the leaders did not take sufficient account, even in the partial experiments which they made, either of the strength of the opposing forces or of the incapacity of the people, after years of separate work, to make common cause for the general advantage.

National workshops, no matter how sound the principle on which they were started—and there were many defects in the scheme of Louis Blanc, even from an economical point of view—could not be carried on successfully save in close connection with national agriculture and national distribution of products. And France, with its millions of small peasant proprietors, the hardest, the most griping, the most individual of men, was perhaps the nation least suited to begin such an experiment. France had passed far beyond the stage of village communal life, and yet had attained but in a small degree the level of the great machine, socialised industry. Paris certainly could not be a socialist centre by itself, when the city depended for its well-being upon the sale of its goods on the markets of the world, and was surrounded by a people each of whom was fighting for his own hand.

That great struggle for emancipation failed. The time was not ripe; and five-and-thirty years later, we can see that even yet it has scarcely come. Ignorance and race hatred, national pride and difference of language still

ciated as years go on. No French revolutionary leader will, I venture to think, stand so high in the eyes of posterity as he. Out of his long life he spent forty years in gaol. All the working-class of Paris, who could, followed his corpse to its grave.

shut the workers out from the great field of international co-operation. Yet there were in 1848 Socialists of established character and reputation in every country in Europe who were ready to make common cause with their brethren elsewhere. In England—though the fact is now too often forgotten or conveniently pushed aside—there was perhaps more practical Socialism than in any other nation. For the teaching of Robert Owen, Sadler, and Oastler, to say nothing of others, had been very widely accepted. Robert Owen held out his hand to the French Socialists, and wrote to them some remarkable letters. Others were in constant correspondence with advanced newspapers in France and Germany; more than one of the leaders in Ireland was on good terms with English revolutionists, as well as with their continental brethren. Further afield, Mazzini, Kossuth, and their fellow-revolutionists were ready to accept assistance in their work from men of any nationality, though their energies were directed chiefly to the enfranchisement of their own countries from the yoke of the stranger; and Mazzini, though a noble moral teacher, had no sympathy with the great class struggle which underlies all national movements, and will end by reducing them all to insignificance.

The necessity for absolutely united action upon the part of the workers in all civilised countries against the capitalist class and the governments which were then as now merely boards of directors elected in the interest of that class, was first made plain in a scientific form in the famous Communist Manifesto signed by Marx and Engels, already referred to more than once, which was printed and published in 1847. This manifesto is by no means written in a popular form. It is rather a historical and philosophical disquisition upon the growth of the bourgeoisie and the

proletariat as the two great antagonistic forces of the present and the future. As a scientific statement of the reasons for combination among the workers of all lands, it remains most valuable. This manifesto was in fact an open declaration of a class war as a necessity for the enfranchisement of the workers. Everything that the respectable bourgeois holds as most sacred—private property only for the well-to-do, higher education for the income-tax payer alone, capital as the benefactor of mankind, pecuniary relations as the eternal basis of the best possible society, are denounced as merely the ruling ideas of the profit-mongering class now dominant, and the ultimate victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie is shadowed forth as a historical necessity, in the same way that the conquest of the feudal system by the bourgeoisie itself was also a historical necessity. The concluding sentences are as follows:—"Communists help every revolutionary movement against existing social and political conditions wherever it may be. In all such movements their object is to point to the question of property as the most important feature in the movement, no matter what the degree of development which property may have reached. Communists lastly strive everywhere for the unity and combination of the democratic parties in all countries. Communists disdain to hide their aims and objects. They openly declare that their ends can only be compassed by the forcible overthrow of all existing social arrangements. Let the governing classes tremble at a Communist Revolution. The working classes have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working-men of the world, Unite!"

But this appeal, able as it was, produced little practical effect at the time. One of its authors, Marx, was driven to

take up his abode in England, where, although he kept up an active correspondence with Socialists of all countries, he devoted himself for many years chiefly to working out his economical and social views in a scientific shape. Even Germany long gave no response to these ideas. In France the success of the Empire was fatal for the time to an active Socialist propaganda. Elsewhere than in England and France, Socialism as an organised force did not exist and never had existed. The agitation, therefore, may be said to have remained almost stationary from 1848 until 1864, a period of sixteen years of complete middle-class ascendancy in every country; although in England the Trade Unions gained something for the workers by their improved organisation. In 1864, however, on the 24th September, a meeting was held at St Martin's Hall, London, with Professor Beesly in the chair, which renewed the Socialist agitation and gave it an international basis. This meeting had been gradually led up to by attempts on the part of the English, French, and German working-men to make common cause with the Poles; nor should the extraordinary effect produced by Garibaldi's visit to England in 1863 be overlooked, as showing that the working-men of London were far more ready to greet a noble popular leader than to bow down before kings and emperors.

Throughout the war between the North and the South the same spirit was shown by the workers. Whilst the upper and middle classes were in favour of the Slave-States, the English working-men who suffered most from the civil war were from beginning to end earnestly on the side of the Northerners. The growing power of the Trade Unions and the capacity shown at this time by their leaders, Odger,

Howell, Lucraft, &c.—those who are still living having been far more advanced men and far more genuine representatives of the workers then than they are to-day—helped on the general cause. A more favourable opportunity, therefore, so far as Englishmen were concerned, could not have been chosen. The best known names of the active Internationalists were those given above, together with Marx, Engels, Eccarius, Lelubez, Tolain, Bosquet, and Hermann Jung. The first executive had Odger for president, Wheeler as treasurer, Cremer as secretary, and corresponding secretaries were appointed for the different European countries. At first Mazzini, with whom Major Wolff was closely connected, joined in the movement, which, in so far as it was merely international, he himself had frequently championed and tried to set on foot. But Mazzini, with all his noble principles and readiness to sacrifice himself for the sake of his cause, had no idea of the economical class struggle which was necessary to right the evils he saw around him. He thought that appeals to the moral nature of the capitalist class, that the doctrines of Christian brotherly love among all classes would be successful; and that when once the national struggles were over, the nations might unite on the basis of a genial middle-class supremacy which should still care for the interests of the workers. Mazzini, in fact, was opposed to the declaration of war, which of course was the very reason for international combination among Socialists at all. His views, however, naturally met with little acceptance among working-men, who found themselves more and more at the mercy of the possessing classes and reduced to the level of mere machines. Mazzini therefore withdrew, and from that time forward Marx was the guiding spirit of the International, the formation of

which his genius had first seen to be necessary for the workers.

Throughout all the documents and manifestoes of the International runs the idea which concludes the great manifesto of 1847—"Proletarians of all countries, unite"—throughout it is plainly stated that the bourgeoisie, and their hangers-on the modern landlords, with their domestic servants, and others who contribute to their luxury, are the real enemies of the working class. By their monopoly of the means of production, by their monopoly of the higher education, in short, by the entire supremacy of the middle class over the whole field of social economy and human knowledge, they have become complete masters of the wage-earners, whom they use as mere machines. Hence the object of the workers in every country must be to obtain peaceably if possible, forcibly if necessary, the complete control of political power in order to turn it to account in social reconstruction. To do this, community of action is essential between men of all nations who work with their hands; and success can only be obtained by the action of the working classes themselves. These views were fully accepted and the need for combination admitted at the meeting in St Martin's Hall, where the rules for the guidance of the International Working Man's Association were laid down.

Nothing can be nobler in spirit or more just in expression than these rules, which, based upon the formula, "no duties without rights, no rights without duties," bind each of the members to act towards one another and all men with truth, uprightness, and morality, without reference to colour, creed, or nationality. The members are also pledged to help those who may change their place of abode, and to receive new-

comers who are members as friends. Though the demands made are adapted to the social conditions of each country, none of the branches are to lose sight of the fact that only by a common movement can the great result aimed at be achieved. The International rapidly grew in strength and gave much assistance to the workers in strikes alike in England and on the continent of Europe. In England, the International was happily instrumental in inducing the return to their own country of workmen who came over or were brought over at a time of strike in order to reduce wages, thus helping to defeat the capitalists, or at any rate to bring them to terms sooner than would otherwise have been possible.

The first Congress was held at Geneva in 1866, at which attempts were made to form a common basis of action for all labour organisations, and to draw the trade unions from the narrow ground of mere struggles for raising wages on to the wider field of international combination for the general good. At this same Congress the question arose between those who wished to exclude the men who merely used brain work from common action with the hand workers, for whose benefit the International was founded. The exclusion of the brain-workers was not carried; which was lucky, seeing that with Marx, Engels, Liebknecht, and others out of the way the International would have had small chance of success. But the organisation was still growing in numbers, and met with denunciation and persecution at the hands of different European Governments. Social emancipation clearly meant political warfare in one shape or another; so in France, in particular, the proceedings of the International were considered as treasonable. The fear of the International was really greater among European states-

men at this time than its power at this or any other period altogether justified. Marx's great ideas were never fully accepted by enough people to give them effect; and although much has been made by outsiders of the secret propaganda, it is at least doubtful whether this ever reached the dimensions which the natural dread of capitalists imagined.

The International beyond question gained ground until the year 1870, and the views which found favour were set forth in increasing detail upon an economical foundation. Thus at the Congress of Brussels in 1868, it was decided that all quarries, coal and other mines, as well as railways, should belong to the State, and be worked by companies of workmen instead of by companies of capitalists, so that under no circumstances could they become a monopoly. With respect to the agricultural land, it was resolved that as land is the primary source of all wealth, and is more and more worked on a large scale with improved machinery, that also should be handled as a State enterprise like the mines and the railways. Canals, roads, telegraphs, and forestry would naturally fall under the same management. Machinery must in like manner belong to the workers, and new machines should only be introduced under recognised guarantees and compensations.* These, of course, are the ideas of the old economists, English and others, taken and applied to a further stage in the evolution of human society; and Robert Owen's utopian "Association of all Classes of all Nations," together with the various international middle-class combinations, are changed into an international organisation of one special class for the purpose of gaining a complete victory in a great class struggle throughout the world. The object is to secure for all the full fruits of their

* Compare Sir James Steuart, quoted in chapter iii.

labour, and as the market for the exchange of goods is as wide as the world, as also capitalism acts without reference to race, creed, or nationality, so must eventually the labourers combine all over the globe to sweep away rent, interest, and profit in every form. Each nation must deal first with its own profit-making class and remove exchange from the control of the individual, as production has already ceased to be individual and has become social; but in the long run complete victory will only be gained for mankind by universal combination among the workers. Needless to say that the man who, more than any other, was the brain of the International, saw himself that, no matter how rapidly the power of mankind over nature might develop, such a complete combination—involving as it does agreement between Europe and Asia, to which the calming-down of race-hatred in Europe is child's-play—must be a long, very long, process. In Europe alone progress might be more rapid.

At first, indeed, notwithstanding the hostility of the Governments of France, Austria, Italy, and Spain, the International made way rapidly. The idea was a great one, the thinker who virtually controlled the organisation and was in receipt of the most correct information had no personal objects to serve, whilst possessing the strange depth and subtlety of the Jewish intellect, combined with the never-ceasing industry of the German. The time, as already stated, was favourable; for strikes were frequent in all countries, and the year 1866 was a period of serious financial and industrial collapse. Further, Lassalle had begun his agitation in Germany in 1862, and had produced an effect upon the workmen of that country which the philosophical turn of his speeches makes it rather difficult for an Englishman to unde[illegible] His success, howe[illegible]

extraordinary, and German workmen who heard him during his brief and stirring career as a public orator, can scarcely speak of him even now without emotion. Lassalle was, like Karl Marx, a Jew, and had been received by Marx himself in 1848 into the Communist organisation—the League of the Just. But after that date Lassalle took no part in the work for fourteen years, devoting himself to studies in a widely different field; nor indeed could it ever be said that the agitator had any economical ideas of his own in the sense that he pushed a step further forward the investigations of his immediate teachers—Marx and Rodbertus.

None the less he did a great work. His "Arbeiterlesebuch," the reprint of a long speech delivered at Leipsig in April 1863, had an astonishing success, although, of course, he met with the usual misrepresentation which all Socialists expect from the capitalist press. His attacks upon the Schulze-Delitsch co-operation trickery, his denunciations of the Manchester School, his proposals for the foundation of large industrial establishments by the help of loans of capital or credit from the State were received with enthusiasm. Moreover, Lassalle was, unlike Blanqui or Marx, essentially a national Socialist, who wished, above all things, to raise the Fatherland to a high level of greatness and glory. Eager to beat down the sham Liberalism rampant in Germany as in England, he wished to do so in order that Germany might be the gainer. And this national turn, though a grave weakness economically, when we see that the market of the world has completely taken the place of the old restricted natio market, was nevertheless a help rather than a agitator who wished to rouse his countr parently hopeless apathy.

He took up, in fact, the programme of the English social agitators of the Chartist times, and applied it with additions to Germany, hoping to bring about the success of his ideas by peaceful and constitutional means, through the ballot and universal suffrage. In fact, the social movement which was at its height in England from 1835 to 1848 and then died down, was reproduced in Germany, and carried to a point which even Robert Owen scarcely foresaw. Lassalle unfortunately was killed in a duel just as he was at the height of his reputation and popularity; but his death in such circumstances gave almost as great an impetus to his teaching as his continued activity could have done.

Lassalle was allowed an amount of latitude in his agitation which was certainly surprising. He was supported rather than checked by Prince Bismarck in his attacks upon the Fortschritt-Partei and the Liberals generally; though could that statesman have foreseen that the result of the Lassalle agitation would be the strengthening of the Marx or International party, which has steadily advocated the use of force when success seemed feasible, and has invariably proposed, wherever possible, to act with the Socialists of foreign countries, we may be quite sure that the agitator would have been more annoyed by officials than he was. In any case, Lassalle's agitation, though in itself national, gained many adherents later for the International Working Man's Association and the German Social-Democratic party. This, which is to-day the only really organised or formidable Socialist body in Germany, made great way through the energetic work of Liebknecht and Bebel, who are now, as they have been for years past, its principal leaders. Germany took the lead in the renewed Socialist agitation, as might have been expected from the long uphill work done by the

scientific writers of the party, and the superior education of the work-people themselves.

Other causes also tended to give Germany the leadership in the agitation, though the men at the head of the movement knew well that the real reorganisation must begin in England ; and from Germany the movement spread easily to Austria, where Rodbertus and Stein, and even the confused Schœffle,* had their share in preparing the way for a thorough agitation. The capitalist system came upon Germany and Austria in a shape and at a time specially favourable to resistance by the people. To begin with, it has crushed down the peasantry and small landowners, by the pressure of indebtedness to Jews and mortgage-banks through methods which are equally applicable in all countries where the crops or the capital-value of the land are hypothecated to money-dealers ; next, it has, by the law of large capitals and the growth of factory industry, shut out from rising young men who have been thoroughly educated that improvement in position which they had been taught to look forward to; thirdly, the political situation, with the crushing weight of the army, and especially in Austria, the domination of Jews in finance and of hide-bound bureaucrats in administration, has increased the discontent. Hence constant emigration, which has drawn away the small capitalists and has left the people face to face with their oppressors. The rapidity with which the Socialist teaching made head was therefore scarcely surprising. The people were

* Schœffle's criticisms of what he supposes the Socialists to mean are not deficient in acuteness. They are at any rate much better than Mr Fawcett's recent article in "Macmillan's Magazine." But Schœffle has no more grasped Marx's theories than M. de Laveleye has. Schœffle's best remarks against Socialist views, as he understands them, are to be found at p. 340, *et seq.*, of his "Kapitalismus und Socialismus."

educated and the lower middle-class disappointed. Socialist journals sprang up in every direction, and when the war with France was prepared on both sides of the frontier, it was the Social-Democrats of Germany who, to their eternal honour, proclaimed that there could be no real cause of quarrel between the people of Germany and the people of France; that, on the contrary, war between the two countries meant a danger to civilisation.

Prior to 1870, the International reached the height of its power under Marx's guidance, and it seemed not impossible that his gigantic programme of a general rising of the European proletariat, at any rate in the great centres of population, might be brought about in his lifetime. In the years just before the war indeed, the struggle between labour and capital was everywhere taking a threatening shape, and the International was the only body which had either the information or the brains at command to give these various movements in different countries a definite and, eventually, a combined organisation. The war between France and Germany did much to destroy the hopes of the people. Old national and race hatreds were stirred afresh, especially among the French, and Sedan and Metz, with the occupation of France, swept away for the time all idea of fraternity. The war over, the rising of the Commune in Paris began, and then Marx saw that the movement was hopeless unless others [illegible] the same time, was denounced as a German Jew [illegible] tried to dissuade the French revolutionists [illegible] sacrificing their own lives.* Yet the Commune

* The principal organ of the International cheered the [illegible] when the struggle had once begun, and spoke of this great [illegible] against the foundation of the mean bourgeois Re- [illegible] necessary prologue to the coming international federation [illegible] of society. The Paris Commune was indeed a land-

startled Europe, and the atrocities committed by Thiers and Gallifet, the 30,000 people killed in cold blood in Paris, the horrors, in short, which accompanied "the triumph of order," have remained fast fixed in the minds of the labouring people all the world over. Whilst the middle-class is content, as a rule, to think of the insurrection as an affair of petroleuses and dynamitards, the Socialist party constantly recalls that, in spite of all the furious blundering, unfortunate rashness, and sad personal jealousies, Paris was never so peaceful nor were so few crimes ever committed within a like period as during the supremacy of the much abused Commune.*

When the rising had been crushed with ferocious cruelty, and the plain of Satory had become a mere shambles, the International issued a manifesto, defending the action of the men who had lost the day, and whose certain defeat its leaders had predicted. This document excited much attention at the time. But with the downfall of the Commune of Paris, and the ill-feeling thence resulting against the International and its great leader, the organisation received its quietus for the time. Thenceforth the working-men seemed to lose heart in England and France, whilst at the same time differences which had before been kept under, now came fully to light in the International itself. Personal bitternesses, which should have been sunk in the greatness of the cause, now had full swing. In vain did Marx at the

mark in the history of peoples. If it had done no more than show the world the nobleness of such a man as Delescluze, or of such a woman as Louise Michel, that alone would have been much.

English Liberals and Conservatives who were in Paris are agreed in this. The government of Paris during the three months, with the miserable results of the siege to contend with—famine within the enemy without—was good in every respect.

Hague Congress strive to save the work of his life from even temporary injury by a noble appeal to all for absolute union and solidarity. "Solidarity. We shall attain the great end which we strive for if we establish this life-giving principle as the firm foundation for the workers of all countries. The Revolution must be absolutely unified, and we find a great example in the Commune in Paris, which fell because a great revolutionary movement did not break out in all the capitals of Europe, in Berlin, in Madrid, at the same time—a movement which should have made common cause with this powerful rising of the proletariat of Paris."

That was the idea of the International and its founder, the simultaneous and concerted action of the workers of Europe and the world against the class which by international agreement took their labour for nothing. But once more the time was not yet, and there arose that great difference between the Collectivists and the Anarchists which answers to the disputes between the Petreans and Paulists, or the Arians and the Athanasians, in the early days of the Christian Church. The Socialist Church of material salvation was split up in the same way. The historical collectivist school of which Marx and Engels are the chief scientific exponents, and the Social-Democratic party in all countries is the organised social and political expression, desires to obtain control of all the forces of production as now developed, owing to the social and economical evolution partly traced in this volume, and by means of State management and international action and agreement to

[illegible] present machinery and future improvements to the [illegible]e of mankind at large—all class distinctions being [illegible]ay, and all contributing their share of the slight labour that would then be needed. Force would

be used to bring this about;* but only in organised fashion and in order to give the workers complete command of existing forms, not certainly to destroy those forms entirely on the chance that something better would grow up out of chaos come again. Revolution being the unavoidable result of causes long prepared through history, and the minds of men being framed by a series of previous circumstances, the most which could be done was to help on the development and to a certain extent direct its course. These collectivist views had been accepted partly consciously and partly unconsciously by a large proportion of the thinkers among the working-men of Europe. In the Teutonic countries in particular, as well as in Scandinavia and in Switzerland, these opinions were prevalent. The failure of the Commune of Paris and the attitude which the International assumed towards the rising in the first instance gave an impetus to a form of revolution which, notwithstanding the great abilities and noble enthusiasm of many of its champions, is really nothing but reaction in disguise. Though Proudhon may be looked upon as the founder of this so-called anarchist school, the Russian Bakunin was certainly the chief apostle of the sect, and it was in great part due to his energy that the anarchist doctrines spread in the "Latin" countries where previously the ideas of the International had obtained a reasonable foothold.† In Spain, especially, Bakunin had a great success, and the recent underground workings of the Mano Negra

* "Force is the midwife of progress, and delivers the old society pregnant with the new," says Marx.

† I am free to admit that I have never been able to get a clear description of anarchism from any of its champions, nor can I grasp the views of Bakunin himself; but I try to give as plain a statement in brief as I can.

are the results of the propaganda which he carried on so assiduously in that country. The revolutionists of France, Italy, and Russia also accepted his views in an increasing degree, but few Germans and no Englishmen have ever followed Bakunin.

Marx, who was of course as much superior to Bakunin in original capacity and acquired knowledge as Faraday to Edison, not content with refuting Bakunin's hasty theories, denounced him as a paid agent of the Russian Government. Other German writers have called the man "the evil spirit of the International," a "hell-hound," and the like pretty names. They have regarded all his movements as dictated by the one object of rendering Germany, and through Germany Europe, an easy prey to Russian barbarism. That Bakunin was at one time, if not always, an ardent champion of the Slavonic race crusade against Germans cannot be questioned, nor possibly that he was, as Lassalle in Germany was, on good terms with more than one member of the Russian Government; to say also that his methods were semi-Asiatic is only to reaffirm that he was a Russian. But that he meant to be a revolutionist and an active one is as clear as that his influence in most countries of Western Europe has been distinctly reactionary. In place of the centralised system with local developments which the Collectivists predict as the necessary result of the economical evolution in the highest forms of civilisation, Bakunin and the anarchists strive for a communal system where each commune shall do what it pleases, and each individual of that commune shall make a little heaven—or hell—for himself. Whether the commune is to be a nation like London or a hamlet like Eye is never explained; possibly for the good reason that the first object of every true revolu-

tionist should be to destroy everything as soon as possible and leave the rest to chance. Anarchism in a word is individualism gone mad.

Bakunin's instructions are at any rate plain enough. "Every genuine revolutionist," he says, "has but one science—simple destruction—and to this end he studies mechanics, physics, chemistry, and perhaps also medicine. With the same object he studies the science of living—men, characters, relationships, as well as all the conditions of existing social order in all possible directions. The object is ever the same, the quickest and surest possible destruction of this disgusting arrangement of the world. He despises public opinion and hates the present social ethics in all their motives and manifestations. For him everything is moral which favours the triumph of the revolution, everything immoral and criminal which hinders it. War to the knife is declared between him and society, open or secret as the case may be, but never-ending, implacable war." * Again, since utter and entire destruction of what exists can alone benefit the people, there must be no intention whatever of attempting to map out a plan of society for the future. "The future organisation will doubtless be developed from the movement and life of the people, but that is the business of future generations. Our work is frightful, complete, implacable, and universal destruction." Thus Bakunin's "New Moral World," with its complete transformation of human sentiments and duties, is to be brought about by wholesale devastation.

* Bakunin's "Catechism of Revolution," Meyer Emancipations—Ten Standes, vol. ii., p. 391. Very pretty reading it all for fathers of snug, respectable middle-class house-

This advice, which extends to the minutest details of conduct for male and female revolutionists, alike as individuals and as members of a revolutionary organisation, was meant in the first place for Russians. How faithfully the so-called Nihilists have followed Bakunin's injunctions may be read in "Underground Russia," where the figure of the man in the printing office, who worked steadily on in the most frightfully insanitary conditions with successive bands of revolutionists, his very name and identity having been forgotten, and his whole being sunk in the cause, is at least an evidence of what extraordinary enthusiasm this creed of universal devastation for the sake of humanity can arouse. There are many similar instances; nor can it be said that a revolutionary sect which numbers among its adherents such men as M. Elisée Réclus, or Prince Krapotkin, or such a woman as the late Sophie Perovskaia, is wanting in men of knowledge and science or in women of rank and beauty. In France, Italy, and Spain also, anarchist groups have been formed, who ever and anon give evidence of their existence by a splutter of volcanic action. "Nothing," say the anarchists, "can be worse than the anarchy and bloodshed which are ever going on daily in the midst of what is called in irony, civilisation. Against that civilisation we have declared war; that civilisation we mean to sweep away utterly by war—war by the individual and war in concert whenever and wherever we can. To us all weapons are lawful, and all your t[illegible] of morality is simply fiddlesticks. Force is being use[illegible] th[illegible] every hour; we use force—the scientif[illegible] [illegible]ssed civilisation—in reply. Thus [illegible] [illegible]nate of potash, and mina[illegible] [illegible]wn and more d[illegible] chem[illegible] [illegible]ost scientifi[illegible]

for our purpose. Thus only can the peoples be finally freed."

Desperate as is the condition of our present society in many respects, it is, I think, difficult for any Englishman to doubt that the anarchist is in reality only a reactionist and the helper of reaction. Those very powers, that very enthusiasm, which is being devoted to bring about complete destruction and to organise perfect vengeance, might, if applied to organised effort, obtain control of the forces of modern society to some good end. Holding such opinions, however, it is not surprising that Bakunin withdrew from the International which Marx had organised, and tried to found one of an anarchist type, which his followers since his death have vainly striven to put in the place of the Social-Democratic organisation. Between the two sections of Revolutionists there is, as already stated, no love lost; and though at times they act in the same direction, they do so from motives as different as those which would actuate a Protestant and a Catholic in fighting for their common Christianity. It was probably the growing power of the anarchist party in the Latin countries more than any belief that America was the best centre of action which led to the transfer of the Central Committee of the International Collectivist organisation from London to New York.

But in the meantime the force of circumstances, the increasing weight of the recurring depressions due to our capitalist system, the rapid development of new forms of production are forcing the labouring classes into international understandings apart from the more conscious action of collectivists or anarchists. The Trades Union Congress at Nottingham in 1883 had before its members little than middle-class measures of the mildest type, the

whole tone of the delegates was such that the capitalist press once more complimented them all round as being no longer in the least dangerous to the class which oppresses the workers as a body. The delegates even went so far as to declare against Nationalisation of the Land, which they voted for in 1882, one delegate actually stating, in my hearing and amid some applause, that the people had no right and could have no right to the land of their own country.* Yet this aristocracy of labour, representing but a small fraction of the workers of the country, and wholly incompetent as they have shown themselves of late years to organise or control strikes such as that of the ironworkers of Staffordshire, or the cotton operatives of Lancashire, were fain to accept an invitation from Paris to an International Congress of representatives of various trades. The minority of more advanced men among the English Trade Unionists may ere long have an opportunity of making their voices heard throughout the civilised world, and the fact that the interests of the labouring class are identical in all countries as opposed to the interests of the possessing classes will become yet more apparent than it is to-day.

Meanwhile, since the muzzle-law of 1878, the Socialist party in Germany, the only thoroughly organised labour party as yet in existence, has been driven to secret propaganda and secret combination. After the final fusion of the Lassalle party with the Marx party in 1876, the Social-Democrats were really the coming political force in Germany, the only one which had genuine enthusiasm combined with thorough political knowledge at its command. The attempts of Hödel and Nöbiling, wh not Socialists, on

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of the Emperor, gave the pretext for persecution, though if the Socialists themselves had shown a bolder front it is doubtful whether the shameful legislation could have been carried. It is no small matter for a reactionary government that all adult male Germans should be trained soldiers, and that few are without some knowledge of political economy. But the leaders held their hand. Their numerous newspapers were therefore suppressed, their meetings put down, and their funds seized. The principal cities of Germany are to-day in a state of siege, and any active Socialist may be called upon to break up his home and quit his place of residence at a moment's notice.

The unity of Germany has been dearly purchased indeed at the cost of the infamous tyranny which crushes down the people.* For no publicity whatever being allowed to the working classes, all the laws in their favour are outraged by the capitalists with impunity, and German competition beats that of other nations by grinding down the men, women, and children of the Fatherland for the profit of the few.† But unless all the teachings of history are falsified a terrible upset is being steadily prepared. Even as it is, the party makes way under all discouragement and persecution, and the return of Bebel for Hamburg this year, without newspapers, public meetings, or any means save a secret propaganda for carrying on his

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electoral canvass, shows what progress is being made. In the army, at the same time, proselytism goes on apace, and the Socialists were probably never so strong in Germany, especially in the fortresses, as they are to-day. Ready as they are to make common cause with revolutionary movements elsewhere, such men are, of course, doubly formidable.

How fast the movement has progressed in Austria may be partly gathered from recent events. The condition of the people alike in town and country, more especially in Vienna itself, favours the spread of Socialist doctrines, whilst the attack upon the Jews is a convenient cover for a more direct attack at an early date upon the great landlords and Christian capitalists. The position which the Jews hold in Austria—the whole political forces of the Empire are completely corrupted and Judaised—renders attacks upon them still more dangerous to the powers that be than similar movements in Russia or Germany. In France the miserable middle-class Republic which has stretched the law against agitators and men on strike to an extent which even the Empire would scarcely have dared to attempt, is manifestly tottering, and the only hope for the future rests in a more or less socialistic party coming to the head of affairs. Few Englishmen fully understand how the weight of taxation and the money-lending system in vogue in France crush down the body of the peasantry, and how wretched are the workers in the large towns. Unfortunately the reactionary efforts of the anarchists may render organised revolution difficult. The same is true, to a still greater extent, in Italy and Spain, where the communal system may be best suited to the people, but where a period of downright anarchy seems likely to precede any fresh development.

in public to the extent that he ought to have done, that the different civilised countries have arrived at widely different stages in the social and economical growth. How many generations, calculated according to the past rate of progress, separate semi-Asiatic Russia, for instance, with its village-communities only now in process of disintegration,* from England with its enormous city proletariat and vast centralised industry? Common action seems almost impossible in such a case, though education may do much to abridge the transition period. And what is true of Russia and England is true in a less degree of the workers of other civilised countries. To my mind we have to base the first real socialistic combination upon the common interests and affinities of the great Celto-Teutonic peoples in America, in Australia, in these islands, and possibly in Germany, ready to accept assistance and help from any other quarter, and prepared to organise this power upon a democratic basis for the industrial welfare of all portions of the federation, but determined to organise independently if others have mere anarchy in view. It is impossible to pursue the subject further at present. I am aware that, as it is, I have given but a meagre sketch of the great movement of the peoples which has been and is going on; but to have omitted a survey (however incomplete) of international movements altogether would have been to neglect a most important feature in the historical development of Socialism.

* The condition of Russia with her people just rising from barbarism below, and all the corruption of western civilisation at the top, is indeed a study. There, east and west, Asia and Europe meet, and the ideas of both continents ferment together. Russia in contact with Germany on the one side and with China on the other, is in a strange position indeed, apart from internal difficulties.

workers as a whole in America are far better off than in Europe; but there, as here, it is the contrast between extreme wealth and excessive poverty which is so distressing, and the workers have made up their minds to remedy it. The United States is entering on another grave commercial crisis; during the last there were 3,000,000 tramps wandering through the country, whilst the risings in Pittsburg and Baltimore in 1876 showed clearly what elements of discord lay below the surface even then. Now matters are much more serious, inasmuch as the depression threatens to be more grievous and of longer duration. In the meantime, also, the number of the labour journals has multiplied exceedingly, and such newspapers as *Truth* of San Francisco, the papers of the same name in New York and Chicago, the *Voice of the People* of New York, the *Volks Zeitung*, &c., have a wide and an increasing circulation throughout the working population of the United States. What, however, is most essential to Europe is, that there is a growing feeling among the leaders of all sections that international action on the part of the labourers is essential.

Already the organised Socialist bodies are stretching their hands across the Atlantic to their fellow-labourers in Europe, anxious to make common cause with them in an economical movement which shall shorten the hours of labour, regulate production and exchange, so as to remove the existing anarchy, put an end to recurrent crises, secure the workers the fruits of their industry, and eventually give them final control over the entire field of production and commerce—the power over the labourers being thus taken out of the hands of the capitalist class in all countries. The di
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CHAPTER XIII.

THE FUTURE.

In considering the future in any branch of human knowledge, it is absolutely necessary to base all attempts at prognostication upon the most careful records of past events. This is true of every field of inquiry, and specially true, though not always so clearly admitted, in regard to the most complicated field of all, that of human society. The study of social and economical problems is now seen to be as hopeless when divorced from sound historical methods as anatomy or surgery which took no account of lower forms of life on the work of previous generations. Not many centuries have elapsed since any man who said he could predict the return of a comet or calculate the recurrence of an eclipse would have been set down as a magician or a maniac. The elaborate diagnosis which will to-day enable a first-rate pathologist to state precisely the course of physical, and through physical of mental disease in a manner surprising even to the educated, is due to as carefully recorded observations as those which have guided the astronomer to his irrefragable conclusion. Rigid accuracy, so far as possible, in the tabulation of facts, guided all the while by scientific imagination, has taken the place of the slip-shod guess-work of old time led astray by theological
The same with the study of the movements a
tions of mankind in civilised society to-day. Just

as we can trace the evolution through the long ages of social development, precisely to that extent may we fairly hope to forecast correctly the next stages of our growth.*

And this is precisely the object of all historical research. The mere facts that men did thus and so in periods long gone by have no practical or scientific bearing upon us, the men of to-day, save that they may lead to a wiser understanding of our present society, and point out the road to an earlier improvement in the conditions of existence for the race. Mankind are modified by their surroundings from generation to generation; but just as the individual man can to some extent, at least, modify his own character and change his own surroundings, so within far wider limits can a complete human society mould the character and modify the surroundings of the next and coming generations.† It is with a view to learn how, taking the fullest

* That this scientific method should now be generally adapted by Socialists we owe above all other men to Karl Marx, who himself, however, was too great a man to claim that absolute originality which some of his followers are foolish enough to assert on his behalf. Marx is the Darwin of modern sociology, and it is not a little remarkable that though in the "Misere de la Philosophie" in 1847, and in earlier writings, as well as in the famous Communist Manifesto which he wrote in conjunction with Engels, he puts forward his theories, the groundwork of his greatest work, "Zur Kritik der politischen Ekonomie," appeared in the same year as the "Origin of Species."

† The truly remarkable experiment which the Jesuits made in the development of social life among the inhabitants of Paraguay seems to me never to have received sufficient attention. Robert Owen's experiment at New Lanark in unfavourable circumstances has been already referred to. What may be done by man in the way of developing *hereditary* qualities in the higher animals is, of course, a matter of ledge. In India we can see clearly that skill in handi- distinctly hereditary. What the animal man in associa- n into, it is, of course, absurd to imagine, but the power is a society is, so far as I can see, illimitable.

account of our fundamentally animal nature, such modifications may most safely be made that we should study the history of Rome, Greece, Egypt, India, China, and modern Europe. But, in all such work, to be of any use, the study of the present must go hand in hand with examination of the past. The man who cannot see and understand the complications of the society in which he himself lives has but a poor chance of comprehending social relations based upon totally different forms of production, exchange, and class interests in the remote past. The difficulty in Europe is that the various nations though passing slowly through the same or very similar stages in the same material evolution, are seen at different points in the growth in the same way that our highly complex capitalist civilisation is contemporaneous with the nomad of Australia or North America, with the stone age and cannibalism in Polynesia, with village communities in Russia, or with feudalism in Japan. As a consequence of this unequal growth, each country must to a great extent work out its own social problems, though there is no hope of a complete solution until the proletariat of Europe and America at any rate unite on the basis of the common interests of labour.

My attempt has been to give a sketch of the development as regards Great Britain alone, though the circle of our commercial interests being now world-wide, the whole globe necessarily enters into the sphere of our economical relations. In this chapter I shall touch briefly upon external questions, such as the treatment of Ireland and India, the operation of capitalism in America and our Colonies, and the steady growth of Socialism in all civilised countries; but England is still the centre of modern industrial relations, even states apparently most independent being

to a large extent providers of food and raw materials for our all-devouring industrialism. With England, therefore, and the reconstruction of English society we have in the future as in the past chiefly to deal. What, then, to resume briefly, has been the course our evolution has followed? What generally is it likely to be? Strictly speaking, of course, it is impossible to take the history of human development at any point, and say "we will begin here." The thousands, the millions of years of the growth of mankind can no more be divided at any special epoch than could the growth of an ancient tree. Change, development, evolution, revolution, decay are going on all the time: there is no statical condition in human society, though movement may be more or less rapid. But the end of the feudal period in England affords a convenient starting-point for such a survey as I have undertaken, and the scientific record of progress can be satisfactorily traced from that point. *"In the society of the middle ages we saw then a petty form of isolated production; in which the means of production were adapted to the use of the individual, and on that account were necessarily themselves small, mean, and of limited power. But these means of production, poor and inefficient as they seem to us, were generally owned by the producers themselves, who were consequently independent and practically free, personally and economically. They produced for immediate use—for the use of the producers themselves, or of the feudal lord to whom they had personal relations. Their products were only offered for sale and entered into exchange when there was an overplus beyond what was needed for actual consumption. This is the first step

* The passage which follows is freely translated from Friedrich Engels' latest work.

towards the production of articles not for use, but as commodities, articles produced with a view to their exchange, at first in small quantities, but already bearing with them in their earliest infancy the germ of social anarchy in production. Production for profit, in fact, gradually slips into a society based upon production for immediate use."

"Upon this follows the capitalist revolution. We traced the entire transformation of the industrial system first through manufacture and simple co-operation, which in themselves necessitate association. Then came the concentration of the means of production which were hitherto scattered. Great workshops at this time are formed; that is to say, the means of production become social, instead of being at the disposal of the individual—this transformation scarcely affects the exchange, and consequently the old methods of appropriation are continued. There is already a socialised method of production, and to give it full development the capitalist appears. He is the owner of the means of production, and he it is who takes possession of the products and turns them into goods for exchange, or merchandise. Production has become a *social* business, but exchange, and with it appropriation, remain individual actions; the social product is seized by the individual capitalist. Here, then, is the fundamental antagonism—the origin of all the antagonisms which our existence is moved by. As a result the producer is separated from his means of production, and the labourer is condemned to wage-slavery his life long: the antagonism referred to at the end of the last chapter between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie shows itself. Secondly, there follows the development of the laws which govern the produc-

tion of mere commodities, especially through the action of the great machine industry since the end of the eighteenth century, the inventions of Hargreaves, Watt, Cartwright, &c. This brings on an unbridled struggle by means of competition at low prices. Here, too, we saw the antagonism between the rigid social *organisation* of production which prevails in each factory and the social *anarchy* in the general production. Thirdly, there was on the one side the constant improvement and perfection of machinery, rendered compulsory upon every manufacturer by competition, which amounted to an ever-increasing displacement of workers, thus creating an industrial army of reserve. On the other hand was to be observed an unlimited extension of production, which was equally compulsory upon every manufacturer. All round appeared an unheard-of development of productive forces and an excess of supply over demand. We had then over-production, glut of the markets, a crisis every ten years, and a vicious circle from which our very production itself could not escape. In one place a superabundance of the means of production and of goods; not far off a superabundance of labourers, without work and without the means of existence. Here are coats, hats, boots, stockings, cotton, and even food, unsaleable, with great factories standing idle; there are men and women half-naked and ill-fed, yet only too ready to work at any employment either in or out of the factories. But these two great powers of production and social well-being cannot come together, because the capitalist form of production forbids the productive forces to act, the goods to move off unless they are first changed into *capital*, and afford a profit, which the very glut itself prevents. The antagonism has been pushed to the point of absurdity. The method of production revolts against the form of exchange.

The bourgeoisie is henceforward shown clearly to be incapable of directing the social forces of production. Fourthly, we notice a partial recognition of the social character of the productive forces absolutely imposed upon the capitalists themselves; the great engines of production and distribution, including the communications by land and sea, are taken possession of first by companies made up of many shareholders, and then by the State.* The bourgeoisie has now become a useless class, all its active work being done and its place filled by wage-earners.

From this record of the past we can foresee the revolution of the wage-earners who will lay hold of the political power and by means of this power transform into public property the social means of production which slip from the hands of the bourgeoisie. By so doing they lose their capitalist character, their social character is allowed free play, and social production, according to a predetermined plan, is rendered possible. The very development of production renders the existence of social classes obsolete. The political authority of the State disappears with the social anarchy of production. Men, masters at length of their own mode of association, become masters of nature, masters of themselves—become, in a word, *Free.*"

Such is the scientific and abstract record of the past and analysis of the future. The idea of the appropriation of the land and the other means of production by the State has long had a hazy existence in the minds of men who wished

* It is an amusing illustration of this necessity to see a thorough middle-class economist like Mr Fawcett obliged to throw over all his played-out principles as an administrator and carry out the State Savings Banks and the State Parcel Post! It is worth noting, also, that the latest writer on this subject, Mr Henry Sidgwick, who belongs to the eclectic bourgeois school, gives up *laissez-faire* as a "principle."

well to their kind. The utopian Socialist bears the same relation to the Socialist of science as the able alchemist or astrologer bears to the chemist or the astronomer of the nineteenth century. There is no possibility of bringing about the great change until men's minds are prepared for it, and the evolution has reached the necessary point. Then utopia ends and actual practice begins. "The abolition of classes, like every other social progress, becomes possible, not from simple conviction among the mass of the people that the existence of these classes is contrary to either equality or justice or fraternity, nor by the simple desire to destroy these classes, but by the advent of new economical conditions. The division of society into a predatory class, and a class preyed upon, into a governing class and an oppressed class, has been the fatal consequence of the small productive power of society. Where social labour furnishes only an amount of products which scarcely exceed what is strictly necessary to maintain the existence of all, where labour consequently occupies all, or nearly all, the time of the great majority of the individuals of whom the society is composed, this society is necessarily divided into classes. Side by side with the great majority exclusively devoted to labour is formed a minority exempt from directly productive labour, and charged with the conduct of the common affairs of the society, the general direction of labour, government, justice, science, arts, &c. It is the law of the division of labour which lies at the bottom of this division of society into classes; which nowise hinders that this division should be brought about by means of force, rapine, trickery, and fraud; which also does not prevent that the dominant class once established should never fail to consolidate its power to the injury of the working class, and to turn mere social management into exploita-

tion of the mass of the people. But if the institution of classes has a certain historical right, this is only for a given period, for a group of known social conditions. It rested on the insufficiency of production; it will be swept away by its complete development."

The ideals of Plato, More, Bellers, Rousseau, Saint Simon, Fourier, even Owen, are replaced in fact by the scientific ideals, so to say, of the student of modern social conditions, who sees in the future near or far human society with its production, its education, its life, its entire existence, organised not to the advantage of any classes however well-born or however dexterous in accumulation, but for the benefit, the well-being, and the true happiness of all. In England the early commencement of this great class struggle is assured. We have seen how small a proportion out of a total population of 30,000,000 are actually engaged in the work of production, and numbers of these upon articles of luxury fashion or sheer waste which merely degrade those who make as well as those who buy them. The condition of this wage-slave class we have also seen—how their lives are short, weary, and miserable, how the paltry philanthropy of those who live upon their labour is grudgingly extended, how impossible it is to hope for anything better in present economical and social arrangements. Yet although the powers at our disposal are so badly and inefficiently applied, and the number of domestic servants alone if turned to useful work would enormously increase our present production, even under such imperfect and degrading conditions as our capitalist system supplies there is enough in actual wealth for all.*

* The domestic wage-slave is a sad specimen of our social system. What life can be more humiliating from the pompous over-fed Jeames

Whilst these truths are being learnt by the people, and ideas of complete change are abroad at the same time also that education of a certain kind, which at least enables boys and girls to read and write, is being widely diffused, just at such a period chemistry has placed at the disposal of the desperate and the needy cheap and powerful explosives the full effects of which are as yet unknown. Every day adds new discoveries in this field; the dynamite of ideas is accompanied in the background by the dynamite of material force. These modern explosives may easily prove to capitalism what gunpowder was to feudalism. Gunpowder did not destroy feudalism; but its discovery and application were contemporaneous with the change in the forms of production and the spread of the new learning which ended by the total subversion of the entire feudal system and the establishment of middle-class domination. We are face to face with a similar but more thorough evolution at this very time. The complications of class antagonism in the old times have been swept away, and we are now in presence of the struggle between the monopolists of the means of production and those who are enslaved by the very production they are instrumental in creating. In England the land where the monopoly of land, industrialism, and the great factory system have attained the highest development, where the middle-class methods of unpaid parliamentary representation and constitutional government were first instituted, it is the fashion to say that Socialism is unknown and that class antagonism

de la Pluche to the starved and worn-out "slavey" of all work, who lives in a cellar all day and sleeps in a garret a few hours at night? All due to our system of production and exchange, and to be altered only by overthrowing that system.

does not exist. Yet under our eyes parliamentary government has proved an utter failure. State rule, which is the stepping-stone to organised Socialism, is making way as the only possibility of saving the mass of the people from permanent degradation and ignorance; or middle-class government from anarchy in administration similar to the anarchy in production which already prevails.

It is high time, therefore, that we should consider, without any feeling of bigotry or passion—save such as cannot but be aroused by the physical misery unnecessarily brought about by the present system—how the present, the next, and succeeding generations may grow up in better social conditions, organising their labour and distributing its products for the benefit of the whole community. If the wage-earning class have nothing to lose and all to gain by a change, so assuredly have the lovers of beauty, happiness, and freedom among the upper and middle classes. Art fades away, literature dwindles under the huckster principles which now guide society. The life of our great cities is devoid of all real beauty or magnificence; that rampant individualism which has hitherto exercised such baneful effects below still produces hideousness above. Can anything be imagined uglier than the great English cities of the nineteenth century? That there hangs around them a sense of power as well as a cloud of fetid smoke may be admitted. But the factory-owner and the jerry-builder, the advertisement contractors and the railroad companies, telegraphs and chimney-pots have taken possession, and we see a positive chaos of ugliness before which the most vigorous art-reformer slinks away hopeless. We of to-day are even worse than our immediate predecessors. They at least loved green trees and gardens even in the midst of the towns they built

for us. But the greed of the speculator has taken order with the greenery too, and now there, as elsewhere, only municipal or State organisation comes in to remedy but too feebly the anarchy brought about by individual grasping and indifference.

Again, returning to the field of production and exchange, what do we find? Not merely that individual enterprises are being turned into companies with shareholders sitting back in their arm-chairs and gaining their interests and profits through superintendents, managers, salaried officials of all kinds—as in railways, banks, factories, mines, which are now really handled by the modern form of the villicus who organises the wage-slave labour and receives in return a fair salary from the easy capitalist class;* not only do we find this process, as remarked above, going on whilst we are talking of individual action and so forth, but we observe that great capitalists and great houses discover, in innumerable instances, that it is more to their advantage to combine than to compete. Time after time on the eve of an industrial crisis has a weak financial house or a weak bank been aided by its competitors, not from any love of the concern itself but for fear of damaging the delicate machinery of credit which enables the surplus value—profits, interest, income—to be piled up out of other men's labour more rapidly. But this very tendency to combine serves in the long run to crush out the weaker vessels. In every direc-

* I am aware that Vanderbilt, Mackay, Jay Gould, and other American capitalists may be quoted as instances against this view that individualism is being supplanted; but even they have worked through companies, and the State is coming in America as here to restrict the practical monopoly which has been brought about by competition. My argument is that competition is historically and actually proving a failure, and that the great stream of human progress sets steadily towards a State organisation in which there are no classes.

tion we see that the law of larger capitals is telling with increasing effect as time rolls on. In the sphere of international banking and trade small houses are being steadily crushed out; they can make no head against the advantages which are given by wider ramifications and larger funds. In industry this is even more clear, large iron-works, large cotton-mills, large ship-building yards will completely shut out small men from the field as time goes on.

So in distribution, where co-operative stores and limited companies slowly break down or absorb the small individual trader, however energetic he may be. Here, indeed, is to be witnessed a strange modification in the method of distribution. For many centuries the division of labour in the workshop went hand in hand with division of labour in the shop. Shop-keepers devoted themselves to the sale of articles in one "line," as grocery, meat, dry-goods, &c., thus gaining special skill as buyers. Now this system is being broken down in every direction, and goods of all kinds, from a pin to a houseful of furniture, from a ham to a coffin, are sold under the same roof, and under the control of the same capital, each department being managed by a salaried official, who perhaps was but yesterday a trader on his own account. Of the hardships to individuals, of the relentless action of this portion of the evolution, it is needless to speak; enough that the small distributors suffer almost as much in return for excessive toil as the "fringe of labour" among the workers themselves, when exposed to this competition of irresistible combination.*

* It need scarcely be explained that a large concern being able to give heavy discounts, or even to carry on for a time at a loss, can undersell in such fashion as to render competition on the part of small men out of the question. When even a partial monopoly is secured prices can be pushed up again. As a balance to this come *real* co-operative stores for distribution. Cheapness, however, does not benefit the worker.

Consider also how the individual absolutely counts for nothing in all this, paradoxical as it may seem in a society where the individual is supposed to be supreme. In production, it is quite clear that where machines are used the individual who works has no influence whatever on the form, texture, or design of his product. From boyhood to manhood, and on to age, the operations on which he is engaged are purely mechanical, whilst the persistent overwork grinds all life, all spontaneity, all power of invention out of the labourer. He becomes, not an individual, but simply so much "food for capital," a mere "hand" to provide surplus value. As Marx has pointed out, whereas the old handicraftsman and the modern artisan have invented many things, the mere factory wage-slaves have invented nothing. Individuality has disappeared, mental power is sapped. The same with the domestic wage-slaves. What individuality as a class is left for them? They are mere appendages to the luxurious, and though they may change their place, they in nowise change their social situation. But when we look further, what individuality is there in our domestic architecture as a whole, what in our dress?—I speak, of course, of the mass of the people. Surely we have but to look around us to be oppressed by an interminable monotony, so much so that even those who strive for originality, are but too apt to develop mere mannerism. Thus as a mere revolt against monotony men may well hail the approach of a changeful period. When also we have reached such a point that men and women of the same race, language, religion, manners, and, up to a certain point, education, cannot sit down side by side at the same table with comfort, as is the case with employers and servants in our modern household, surely the anarchy of the existing society strikes us from another point of view.

What, then, it may be asked, is the end of all this, to what do these various economical and social statements tend? Admitting that the historical survey is accurate, that the economical exposition is sound,—a large admission no doubt for many,—that the social observations are in accordance with what all of us can see for ourselves, what practical remedies are proposed for this state of things? Such questions are perhaps natural, and yet they are in nine cases out of ten but the outcome of impatience and incapacity. For any man to attempt to chart down actual remedies as a physician would—in how many cases injuriously—prescribe pills, is simple presumption. The utmost that can be done is to show clearly how the movement of ideas is progressing; how after millions of years of evolution and revolution, mankind in the most civilised, or rather most highly developed country, has attained such power over nature that it is possible to organise in the future a socialist community which shall use those powers for the benefit of all. The reorganisation may be helped by the educated classes above, but it must inevitably grow up from below. And it is growing. For instance, we have seen how in England the monopoly of land has been the result of centuries of economical, social, political pressure. From generation to generation the idea of nationalising the land has been kept alive among the people. A hundred years ago, Thomas Spence of Newcastle formulated a complete scheme to bring about this result through the action of parishes and municipalities.* The time was not ripe. Since then the land has got into fewer and fewer hands. And now the idea of nationalisation, of the right and the power

* This pamphlet I reprinted at a penny last year. It has sold to the number of many thousands.

of the nation at large to take up its heritage, springs afresh among the people. The sale of 100,000 copies of Mr Henry George's book in a few months, the passing of the resolution in favour of the nationalisation of the land at the Trade Union Congress of 1882 by a large majority, the adoption of the same by the miners of the North of England—all shows that in this direction at least the desire for a real collective liberty, though not yet fully understood, is making way. Nationalisation of the land, in short, is passing out of the sphere of mere theory into the domain of what is foolishly called "practical politics," by pressure from below. But no thinking worker stops at Mr George; he sees that the antagonism of class interest lies far deeper than the mere monopoly of the landlord; consequently the socialist body is increasing with a rapidity not even the most sanguine could have supposed possible a few years ago. Once more, economical necessities are reflected in the thoughts of men.

But take another field—education. We are educating in effect under the control of the State, but the ill-fed children can barely support the fatigue of learning. Here, too, ideas are turning in a direction quite opposed to parental authority which already has been largely curtailed by legislation. Of the tendency now exhibiting itself to turn workhouses into wholesome phalansteries and the anarchic effect of such action in present economical conditions I spoke in the eleventh chapter. But the ideas and the organisation must grow up from below. They are growing. The population of England has become practically nomadic to a degree which few have any idea of, both within and without the city limits. What do we find among these very nomads? what is generally admitted to be true in relation to the most materialised,

embruted, and, to all appearance, hopeless class among us? That destitute of religion, devoid of what we call morality, terribly unclean, and in some senses brutal, "the fringe of labour," the poorest of the poor display towards one another the noblest charity, and divide with one another in the purest spirit of communism all that they may earn. Knowing what uncertainty, misery, and privation were yesterday, expecting themselves the like misery to-morrow, they relieve their brethren and their sisters of the human kind in fellowship and true philanthropy to-day.

Here, then, once more, out of the rottenness and ruin of our decaying society a new and higher organisation may be slowly evolved; out of the depths of degradation a truer morality may arise. In the evidence of the Rev. S. A. Barnett of St Jude's, Whitechapel, before the Artisans and Labourers Committee, he says, speaking of the dwellers in the lowest sort of common lodging houses, "they are largely communists; that is if one earns more one day, he shares it with a neighbour who earns little, so that they could not afford to separate. This is quite a common practice; I do not say that it is done according to any rule; but as a matter of fact, if a man does well one day he helps his neighbour, and they get through the bad times by those means." "That is the constant practice?" "Yes, they help one another largely. Nothing surprises one more than the way in which the poor help the poor." "It is not according to any rule?" "No." "A man who is helped at one time will feel bound to help others at another time?" "When his good turn comes." "Is that engagement faithfully kept?" "Very faithfully kept, though there are no rules or contract." I believe that Mr Barnett's experience accords with that of all who have seen much of

the lives of the very poor; it is certainly in agreement with what I have observed myself. This tacit agreement to help one another is, of course, very different from the recognised engagements in the higher ranks of labour to make common cause against the capitalist in order to reduce the hours of labour, to raise wages, or the like; but it certainly shows that just as the new methods of production force the workers to combine in some degree against the capitalists, and the capitalists to take measures against the workers in combination, so the uncertainty of existence among the fringe of labour compels those who live in this happy-go-lucky manner into a rude Socialism of their own.

Thus breaking down and building up go slowly on together, and new forms arise to displace the old.* It is the

* The Democratic Federation propose the following as "stepping-stones to a happier period"—

The compulsory construction of healthy artisans' and agricultural labourers' dwellings in proportion to the population, such dwellings to be let at rents to cover the cost of construction and maintenance alone.

Free compulsory education for all classes, together with the provision of at least one wholesome meal a day in each school.

Eight hours or less to be the normal working day in all trades.

Cumulative taxation upon all incomes above a fixed minimum not exceeding £300 a year.

The establishment of national banks which shall absorb all private institutions that derive a profit from operations in money or credit.

Rapid extinction of the national debt.

Nationalisation of the land, and organisation of industrial and agricultural armies under State control on co-operative principles.

The principal objections I have heard in regard to this are to the first and last proposals. But from the point of view of the producers there can surely be no objection to any of them. The object is to give full development to that organisation of industry and collective effort which is gradually growing up around us. Compulsory labour on all should be considered as taken for granted. For my own part I have little doubt that land in the sense of organised production under State control

same with the family. That, in the German-Christian sense of marriage for life and responsibility of the parents for the children born in wedlock, is almost at an end even now. Divorce and the habitual use of prostitution among the men of the upper and middle classes are but symptoms of the complete change in all family relations which is going on among the mass of the people. It has been absolutely necessary, as recounted, that the State should step in between parents and children to protect them from over-work, and to take care that the next generation does not grow up wholly ignorant; meanwhile the connection between the two sexes is, as the official records show us, quite free from any sense of responsibility or permanence among a large portion of the population. Manifestly when such modifications are taking place society is undergoing a great and crucial revolution within, which may show itself openly either five, ten, or fifty years hence, but which cannot in the nature of the case be delayed beyond a calculable period. The socialist tendencies are clearly developing themselves, and the next stage in the history of the human race must be a widely extended communism.*

But whilst we may thus foresee that in time to come the forces which mankind can bring to bear upon nature will be used not to enslave the workers but to bring about general

will be the last portion of our system which will be "nationalised," though landlords will probably be expropriated first. Peasant proprietorship is of course hopeless.

* But that it may seem too fanciful I would urge that the only field of art in which our bourgeois society has produced anything great is music. And in music the greatest effects are produced by the orchestra d chorus—truly socialist organisations in which, under a conductor, ablest performers contribute to the general effect and subordinate individual capacity to that. That the first violin is paid more the beginner does not affect the illustration.

happiness; whilst, further, it would be absurd indeed to lay down any hard and fast line along which progress shall be made, there are certain general principles which, if applied by the men of the present generation, cannot fail to secure better conditions of life for themselves and their successors. Such a measure is the providing good, sound, healthy dwellings for labourers in town and country alike. Here private enterprise has been tried and has been found utterly wanting. The facts are so well known that it is scarcely necessary to re-state them. In the cities, as in the rural districts, overcrowded and unhealthy homes are the rule rather than the exception. If society is not to remain utterly anarchical, the truest political economy recommends that the wealth-producers should be well housed, even at the cost of the community.* Yet any definite proposal that steps should be taken at once to remedy the hideous evils exposed is met by the old middle-class objections—first, that to build houses and rent them at cost involves a burden on the ratepayers; second, that no portion of the working population has a right to an advantage over the rest. The answer to the first objection is, of course, that as the labourers alone produce any wealth, the ratepayers must have derived the means they possess from those labourers, and but give back a portion of what they have individually taken for social purposes. Besides, it may be reasonably contended that the well-to-do classes are, as a rule, a good deal overhoused; and some have urged that direct expropriation should be resorted

* Since this was in type Lord Salisbury's article urging State action has appeared in the *National Review*. Both parties are now agreed to apply semi-Socialist methods in this matter of housing the poor; but both still assume a dependence by the State upon the capitalist class for loans! Nothing can be done without paying toll to the profit-mongers. On this point also landlords and capitalists agree.

to the instant the workers are strong enough to act. Thus the erection of healthy dwellings with public funds to be rented at cost is, in a wide sense, a conservative measure, for a continuance of the present state of things must inevitably lead to violence. In addition to which it would act favourably in many ways; for the State or municipal competition being constant in its operation, the rents of existing dwellings would steadily fall—no compensation, of course, being given for unhealthy houses removed—whilst the rise in the rates would compel the well-to-do to throw good houses on to the market, thus enlarging the sphere of action. It will be observed that in all such proposals it is taken for granted that as the producers obtain the power, they will use it to secure good conditions of life for themselves. Nor can I see that any Political Economist is other than a pedant who refuses to recognise that the well-being of the workers should be the supreme object of the creation of all wealth.

The familiar objection about jobbery I consider it unnecessary to deal with. Those who use this argument against constructive Socialism always either pass over or actually champion the robbery and jobbery, legal and illegal, which goes on under our present system. How by combination and co-operation, by the planting of garden ground, by the erection of common kitchens, baths, halls of recreation, reading-rooms, splendid buildings and surroundings might be created rivalling in beauty the monasteries of the middle ages or the palaces of Moorish Spain, I will leave to my friend William Morris to depict—only saying that here imagination may proceed on the sure footing of what has been accomplished in many countries by communal effort, and may be done again.* Theory and practice,

* "Therefore it is the wise man's part to use the world and deli

imagination and reality, blend together when men have such engines of construction as they possess to-day. The present arrangements for housing the poor are admitted on all hands to be chaotic, whilst tending to perpetuate class distinctions. Here, at any rate, are proposals which, within a short period, would bring about a new state of things, whilst tending all the time to abolish such distinctions, and lead to the period when all shall labour and none shall toil. Once admit that the present state of things is monstrous, and even middle-class men and aristocrats will be driven fast, as they have already been driven slowly, towards Socialist measures.

Good housing being taken as the first essential in our present conditions of existence—for how can any health or morality be looked for without this?—education may fairly be considered as second. Education for adults means, of course, merely an endeavour to rouse them to consider the facts by which they are surrounded, with a view to changing the present social and political arrangements. But education of children involves, especially now that it is being made more and more every day a communal and State matter, the gravest considerations as to what education should mean for all classes. Our present School Board education does not in practice perpetuate the class differences

himself in it as best he may, not indeed to satiety, for that is no delight. A wise man, I say, will recruit and refresh himself with temperate and pleasant meat and drink: yea, and with perfumes, the fair prospect of green woods, apparel, music, sports, and exercises, stage-plays, and the like, which every man may enjoy without harm to his neighbour. For the human body is compounded of very many parts different of kind, which ever stand in need of new and various nourishment, that the whole body alike may be fit for all action incident to its kind, and that by consequence the mind may be equally fit for apprehending many things at once."—Pollock's "Spinoza," p. 264.

which education in the best sense should remove. It is clear that we shall have compulsory and free education within the next few years, and no compulsion is possible in the long run which does not affect all classes in a community which has democracy for its basis. The time, therefore, is coming when the public free schools of England will be the best, cheapest, and easiest means for parents to educate their children, if compulsion did not exist.

But here at the outset three grave questions arise: 1. At what age should the education begin, and what food should be given? 2. What sort of education should be given? 3. How are the teachers to be taught? The first question is the most important of all. In considering it we cannot overlook the terrible neglect of children during their early years in all our industrial centres. Good food in childhood is the basis of all good education. At present the majority of the children of the workers in town and country do not get such good food. Consequently the instruction they receive on empty or insufficiently filled stomachs is physically harmful to them. Robert Owen, whose system of education at New Lanark was the most successful ever seen, took the children at two years of age and kept them during the whole of the day, feeding them, giving them amusement, and returning them to their parents at night. That public creches should be provided in factory towns is a necessity, and the necessity for food in them is equally apparent. Thus the creche and the kindergarten would lead up to the school. But in each the best plain, well-cooked food should be given to the child- delicate babies receiving
required. Physical hea

and it is practically impossible to have the one without the other. It is unfortunately beyond the power of society to correct at once the circumstances in which these children are born, or to secure immediately good housing and food for the fathers and mothers; but it is easy to arrange good food for the children, and to get this important social reform in all schools serious efforts should be made. Thus at public creches, public kinder-gartens, and public schools, food would be provided as a matter of course for the average attendance of children. Education, in fact, would begin as soon as the child could leave its mother; or at an age fixed by law, if the child was properly fed and tended at home. The community has the right to protect and care for the interests of the next generation, whether the parents like it or not.

Secondly, What sort of education should be given? Unquestionably an education in which instruction in the mechanism of learning should be combined with physical and industrial education as well as with the most complete amusement. Only of late years have physical education and amusement been admitted as desirable. Yet all experience has shown that drilling, dancing, gymnastic exercise, indoor and outdoor games, make the task alike of children and teachers far easier. The mistake of keeping too long at one thing, and the worse mistake of forcing the clever by emulation vitiate our entire present system. Children should be educated to work and play for, instead of against, one another, whilst industrial education, in the sense of preparing the child to do a certain share of the work of life

iv by actual labour, is most important. In a matter

it is impossible to lay down any hard and fast

ation were adapted to each child's capacities,

and the children were trained up to be useful citizens in an organised society, education might and would be profitably continued for all far beyond the limits of the age now fixed. There need be no more difficulty in arranging to give each child full play for its special faculties than there is in a family: the individual, in fact, would have the fullest outlet and consideration. Where the liability of all to work with their hands is once established the anxiety of all will be to give the best opportunities to each of developing himself or herself to the highest point.* In this respect physical history is of the highest importance. In our chaotic society of to-day we individually know little or nothing, as Mr Herbert Spencer has truly urged, of the science of our own physical structure, and far less of the characteristics and the antecedent physical circumstances of the persons who have combined to bring into the world a human animal with such and such aptitudes and such and such weaknesses. In any scientific education the facts about each individual child and his progenitors would be as far as possible known, and care taken to watch the development of the germs of physical disease which might be inherited. Thus, without overwork or excessive application, the majority of children would arrive at the age when steady work was demanded of them physically strong and well-trained, accustomed to look upon labour as a necessary portion of the daily life, and would be clear of class prejudice or theological bigotry.† How rapidly children improve in strength and char-

* "Past society was formed for war and by war, future society must be formed by labour for labour."—Saint Simon.

† I lay stress upon the *habit* of work, because in our present condition of production it is habit of work at machines which is in effect chiefly needed. My opinion is that in the future the industrial and agric[illegible] will be shared by all if desired.

acter under good food, fresh air, and kindly treatment, may be seen in numberless instances at home without going to the emigrant fields of America and New Zealand.*

Thirdly, how are we to get the teachers? This is one of the most serious drawbacks to our present arrangements. The teachers themselves are brought up to attach an undue and injurious importance to mere instruction. They too often forget owing to this how complicated a structure even babydom is. Getting good teachers has been the greatest difficulty encountered up to the present time in every national scheme of education. Every great educational reformer that ever lived has experienced this. My impression is, that the very change in the methods of education advocated above, the combination of teaching with physical improvement, games, excursions, open-air lectures, will of themselves gradually supply another school of teachers. Great advances have been made already, and an enthusiasm for instruction is spreading. The people are certainly more willing that their children should learn—the heavy tax upon them from their small wages notwithstanding—and teaching is no longer regarded as a mean employment. It

* I have not attempted to deal here with the manner in which present educational institutions might be turned to account in giving complete free education of the highest kind to all classes. But, as a member of one of the two great universities, I see with regret that Oxford and Cambridge have been turned into mere middle-class preserves. Here are universities with a noble history, founded for the most part by ecclesiastics in order to provide cheap education of the higher class for the poor, used as a rule by the well-to-do. Steps are being taken, I know, to place these great institutions on a wider and more stable basis, but they are only trifling compared with the need. The same with our "public schools." The "governing classes" cry down free for the poor, but they grab free education for their own children ver reduces its cost—whenever and wherever they can. To se matters in detail would require a separate volume.

is really the noblest employment on which men and women can be engaged, and the establishment of a free, rational, pleasant system of education for all, based upon good food and physical and industrial training, will of itself tend to produce teachers who will carry on and extend the best methods of unsectarian instruction. Children who are brought up unforced, unbeaten, and well fed, will certainly take care that the State or municipal schools for their children shall be no worse than those in which they passed their own earlier years. In this way the tendency of good education for all classes on the same basis will be to produce better education still, just as bad education tends towards greater ignorance and prejudice. The improvement of the new rational society founded on science and guided by knowledge will then be simple and easy.

Good housing and good education are easily attainable, and the cost of both are trifling to a nation which by the work of less than 8,000,000 of its members and their families enjoys a total income of £1,300,000,000 a year without the most scientific application of the means of production. But this income is only obtained by the excessive overwork of a large proportion of the producers, both in regard to hours and intensity of labour. Further, a great part of this vast gross income is most wastefully spent on drink, useless luxuries, domestic servants, and the like. There would be distinct gain, therefore, if on the one hand the hours of labour were reduced by law to eight, seven, six a day, at the same time that the expenditure on luxury were reduced, and all were compelled by degrees to do their share of work. How little the necessary share of work to provide food and comfort for all need be if all worked, few perhaps, at any rate of the upper and midd

consider. But let us for a moment reflect that on the one hand the cheapness of labour—that is to say, the small amount of produce on which human beings can exist and work—absolutely keeps back the introduction of labour-saving machines in many directions; whilst on the other a single agricultural labourer, even as it is with machinery and manures insufficiently used, produces enough food for ten to twenty persons, and a single workman in a cotton,* cloth, or boot factory, enough cotton, woollen stuff or boots to clothe and shoe hundreds.† Useless classes are also not confined to domestic servants or mere loungers. The whole noble array of barristers, solicitors, accountants, surveyors, agents, and about ninety-nine hundredths of the present distributors, would be wholly useless in a properly organised society. They live upon the existing bourgeois system, out of which they suck no small advantage; they will disappear with the huckster arrangements on which they thrive. The following statistics for 1869, compiled by Mr William Hoyle to show the results of the drink traffic in Lancashire alone, give some idea of the waste which goes on in other directions:—‡

1. £13,299,750 directly spent upon intoxicating liquors.
2. £1,113,244 paid in poor and police rates.
3. 102,694 paupers.
4. 30,000 (or more) vagrants idling as vagabonds about the streets.

* "One person will supply as much cotton as will give 550 people 18 yards a head per year."—Hoyle

† In America where labour is dear, mechanical appliances are far more freely used in every direction, and "dirty work" is largely ...ded by contrivances to that end. In England women still pull boats ...; they are cheaper than horses.

... National Resources."

5. 4,706 lunatics.
6. 3,749 inquests.
7. 90,257 persons brought before the magistrates and convicted of crime.
8. 5,913 depredators, offenders, and suspected persons who are abroad.
9. 2,749 houses of bad character, brothels, receivers of stolen goods, &c.
10. 3,316 policemen employed to protect society from the dangers arising therefrom.
11. 17,733 public-houses and beershops.
12. 70,932 drunkards filling innumerable houses with misery.
13. 7,000,000 or more bushels of grain destroyed in manufacturing the drink, or equal to 105,000,000 4-lb loaves.
14. 4,000 or 5,000 persons have employment found in the manufacture of drink.

Here at once is a summary which proves that, whatever be the causes, the existing state of things is injurious and in the highest degree wasteful. A man need not be a teetotaller to appreciate the force of the statement that "if all the money which intoxicating liquors cost this nation were invested in building houses for half-a-dozen years, there would be a new house built for every family in the United Kingdom." But let us hear Mr William Hoyle a little farther. He says, p. 33, "The total amount of labour needed to provide for our wants will be as follows:—Food, half an hour's labour daily; clothing, fifteen minutes' labour daily; bonus, &c. half an hour's labour; that is (assuming every person did their share) a total of 1¼ hour's daily labour would suffice to supply us in abundance with the

comforts of life. The progress of invention and the increasing application of machinery are daily reducing even this amount of labour, so that the part which has now to be played by man is simply to superintend the machinery which does the work."* Precisely. And yet there are those who contend in the face of the shameful overwork going on in every direction, that it would be an interference with individual rights and "freedom of contract" to ordain that eight hours or less should be the extreme limit of work in all trades, though there are thousands of people out of work all over the country at the very same time.† Such a curtailment of the hours of labour has long been fitfully agitated for, but unluckily the workers have never made common cause as a class in favour of such action.‡

* Compare Aristotle, "Politics."

† Bear in mind those who work the longest hours have on the average lowest wages.

‡ "For seeing they bestow but six hours in work, perchance you may think that the lack of some necessary things hereof may ensue. But this is nothing so; for that small time is not only enough, but also too much for the store and abundance of all things that be requisite either for the necessity or commodity of life. The which thing you shall also see and perceive, if you weigh and consider with yourselves how great a part of the people in other countries liveth idle. . . . And truly you shall find them much fewer than you thought by whose labour all these things are wrought, that in men's affairs are now daily used and frequented. Now consider with yourself of these few that do work, how few be occupied in necessary work? . . . But if all these that be now busied about unprofitable occupations, with all the whole flock of them that live idly and slothfully, which consume and waste every one of them more of these things that come by other men's labour, than two of the workmen themselves do: if all these (I say) were set to profitable occupations, you will easily perceive how little time would be enough; yea, and too much to store us with all things that may be requisite either for necessity or commodity, yea, or for pleasure, so that the same pleasure be true and natural."—Sir Thomas More, "Utopia," chapter iv.

It would be well that in all Government departments and dockyards a beginning should be made by appointing eight hours or less as the working day, and fixing also a minimum wage. In this way State employment might be advantageously extended from the Post, Telegraphs, Parcels, Revenue, Savings Banks, Arms Factories, Dockyards, &c., to the wider fields of Railways, Shipping, the Land and general production, a department already invaded in cases where special supplies are needed. Organisation of labour under State control is absolutely injurious to the workers if based upon the ruinous competition brought about by our capitalist system. But by introducing the principle of short hours and still more of minimum payments, a great step forward may be made.* The three measures named above, then, are necessary forerunners or accompaniments of that organisation of industry towards which we are moving. Good housing at cost, good food and education in childhood at expense of the community, short hours and equal payments which allow fully for good clothing and good food for labour done under State or Municipal control are at any rate practical enough.† Even as it is the State is the greatest individual employer

* "Take England, for example: how marvellous the mass, the number, the perfection of technical appliances which are set to work to economise labour! Nevertheless, if work were reduced to-morrow to a normal scale, proportional to the age and sex of the wage-earners, the actual working population would fall far short of the national work of production. Will they nill they, the so-called 'unproductive labourers' would have to turn 'productive labourers.'"—Marx, "Le Capital," chapter xxv., p. 281, French edition.

† "In case there be no overplus then 'tis fit to retrench a l the delicacy of others feeding in quantity or quality, few me less than double of what might suffice them as the bare n nature."—Sir W. Petty.

of labour, and such changes would soon produce an enormous effect.*

Here, too, it is necessary to point out that these matters cannot be dealt with separately, or as if working men to-day were mere subjects for experiment on the part of the "governing classes." The whole social problem must be dealt with in its entirety by the class which produces wealth, assisted by such of the educated class as feel the absolute necessity for changing our present system. It is natural that those who gain by the present state of things should consider only how little they can surrender, maintaining all the while the existing bitter competition. The middle-class ideas of personal freedom, equality before the law and freedom of contract, have meant simply economical and social tyranny, worse in its physical results for the proletariat than any direct despotism ever known. Therefore this sham

* The effect produced upon the general mind of the people by the declaration of a high wages minimum and a short day's work—at first, say eight or seven hours—in all State employ would be very great. Workers outside would begin to hold very strong language in the matter of overwork and underpay. Capitalists would be forced to take public opinion into account. At the same time I am not at all hopeful that the break up of the existing miserable competition will be brought about in the way proposed, or at all, until the workers have conquered their right to the collective ownership of the means of production in a great class struggle.

Lassalle proposed that the State should advance several millions sterling in order to set on foot co-operative industries to be worked by the labourers themselves. But, whether this plan would succeed or not, there is really no need for any such action in this country at any rate. The vast joint-stock companies are precisely the sort of organisation which is needed, and these are now worked by superintendents, under boards for the benefit of shareholders. They might far better be t to be managed by the State for the benefit of the expositions did a great deal of good in showing the isting arrangements, and it is a pity that our , Cobbett, and others, are not more read

liberty which invokes such shameful oppression must be swept away, and real liberty based upon social and economical equality of conditions substituted. How much of what we now consider essential will disappear in this new period when the entire means of production, including the land, are at the disposal of the people, and collective is substituted for individual exchange, need not be insisted upon. The least thoughtful must understand that it involves a complete overthrow of the existing domination maintained by a paid standing army, carried on by political factions, and trusting for permanence to a production for profit which will then necessarily disappear. Labour organised alike in town and country for the benefit of the workers, exchange conducted to the same end, international agreements for purely industrial objects,—the spread of such ideas must bring about great results even in the long period of transition which may precede their final realization. We cannot return if we would to the small primitive individualised methods of our ancestors, nor continue their individual plan of exchange : consequently social production must be accompanied by social exchange ; and a regulated application of these joint social arrangements, and all improvements thence resulting, to the advantage of the community at large will be the rule. This process we see going on under our eyes, and the only question is whether we wish to hasten or to slacken an advance inevitable in either case. The succession of world-wide crises, of which we have now had six in this century, the last having been almost a permanent crisis since 1878, prove conclusively that apart from any mere currency questions or local difficulties the workers are subject to periods of fearful privation, owing to
in which production at large is carried on

exchange is conducted. No mere half measures, no ingenious sophistries evolved out of fortnightly settlements, three months' bills and bankers' balances, will suffice to deal with the anarchy due to a radically injurious system. We in England must face this question at once. The increasing dependence upon foreign sources of food supply, the growth of foreign competition in open markets, the fearful condition of the fringe of labour, force us to national and international socialism as the only way of escape from an insupportable situation at home for the mass of the people.

That the land, and with the land, mines, rivers, &c., will come under the control of the people we have already seen, nor is it reasonable to suppose that any compensation will be given to the landholders, the fund-holders, or the railway or water shareholders, when it has been determined to assume administration of all for the public benefit. To compromise in order to avoid bloodshed, may be a course that would recommend itself to the workers; but this would be a mere transfer of holdings for a time. In the end the entire power and means of production will belong to the State or its delegates, who will then be like the State itself, simply one great body of equal men organised to act in concert, with leaders chosen by themselves. It is for this purpose and not from any theoretical political grievance, that the proletariat or wage-earners must necessarily take hold of the governing power, through the medium of universal suffrage, putting an end for ever to hereditary authority and class distinctions. Centralisation and decentralisation would thus have free play in the functions of the whole community, as collective [illegible] would leave the freest play to individual [illegible]ction, save the accumulation of wealth at [illegible]abour of others. Towards this organisa-

tion national banks (already foreshadowed in the Government Savings Banks), national insurance, and provision against bad seasons would be essential steps. Credit is the most vulnerable portion of our present system, and will tumble to pieces at the first severe shock of class warfare; but with the beginnings of collective exchange, a better foundation than that of such individual credit will be found for international transactions.

But it may be asked, how is value to be determined save by competition and higgling of the market? Value is not so determined to-day. Supply and demand only regulate relative values of commodities over short periods; cost of production, that is, the average quantity of social human labour needed to bring them forward for exchange, governs the exchange value of the mass of commodities in the long run. A letter is sent nearly the world over for 2½d., no matter how important the nature of its contents, or how anxious the sender to have it delivered; public advantage has produced an international post in spite of all international jealousies. A traveller takes a passage at a fixed cost, though may be he would pay fifty times the sum asked rather than not go. Even in cities the government or the municipalities regulate cab-fares, in order to check the working of that very higgling of the market, to regulate the action of those very supply and demand, and caveat emptor maxims which middle-class economists never weary of proclaiming as the law of all laws, not to be set aside without positive danger. Here then, we may foresee with the accuracy of scientific knowledge a community in which the social forces will be used for determinate social ends. Take, for instance, the ownership of com[illegible]ations by the people. We see at once how the cl[illegible] of transport which would [illegible]ence

result would enable people to move from country to city, or from city to country, in accordance with a regular arrangement. By more careful prognostication of the weather, men will be able to judge far more accurately than to-day of the critical periods of harvest, and could throw a whole army of workers, with the most perfect machinery, on the threatened point.

No longer also should inventions be used against instead of for mankind. At the end of the last century steam, with all its enormous powers, went without heed or protest into the hands of the capitalist class. A natural power, which is to steam what steam was to the old horse-power, electricity, is again going into the hands of the capitalist class. But now the protest against this is loud and clear. The workers have begun to understand that the great forces of nature, which none invented and which none produce, can only be adequately handled by men in social union. When we know that such a force as Niagara, such a power as the tides, such an agent as the wind, such a universal and all-pervading force as the heat of the sun, may be turned to account and stored for human use within the next few years, the portals of the future open wide before us and we gaze upon a long vista of golden ages for mankind. Such powers could not permanently belong and cannot be safely handled by a clique or a class. Wealth may easily be made as plentiful as water, but its distribution must be for each according to his needs, as the rule will be for each according to his abilities. Doubtless centuries may pass before the goal is reached; but that is no reason to question that the last
ss struggle has begun nor why we should be
m helping on the evolution as far as we may.*

*...s dit Candide que les hommes se soient tonjours mutu-

To all this, however, the objection still remains which is constantly urged. To strive for Socialism, so it is said, is to attempt to stamp out the individual, to reduce mankind to one dead level of monotony and uniformity, where each acts like a machine. How true this description is of our present society, how for the mass of mankind the individual life is becoming more and more one of monotonous and hopeless drudgery must be clear to all who have read the foregoing pages. The workers surely would not find it monotonous or a deadening of individuality to have only two or three hours' necessary work at the outside in place of their present excessive and exhausting drudgery. They at least might consider that during these hours of leisure or refreshing employment they had some chance of asserting an individuality now crushed into the mire by the greedy class individualism above. What powers of invention, what instincts of beauty, what poetry and art and imagination are not now utterly ruined under existing conditions. But no man will strive save for individual or family gain, none will invent or discover save for individual profit? Is this so? The whole history of mankind tells the contrary. The greatest works ever achieved, and the noblest sacrifices of self that have ever been made, have been due to fidelity to a

ellement massacrés comme ils font aujourdhui, qu'ils aient tonjours été menteurs, fourbes, perfides, ingrats, brigands, faibles, volages, lâches envieux, gourmands, ivrognes, avares, ambitieux, sanguinaires, calomniateurs, débauchés, fanatiques, hypocrites et sots? Croyez-vous dit Martin que les eperviers aient toujours mangé des pigeons quand ils en ont trouvé? Oui sans doute dit Candide. Eh bien dit Martin, si les eperviers ont toujours eu le même caractère pourquoi voulez-vous que les hommes aient changé le leur? Oh! dit Candide, il y a bien de la difference, car le libre arbitre . . . en raisonnant ainsi ils arrivèrent à Bordeaux."—Voltaire, "Candide," chap. 21. Happily Socialism does not rest on free will, nor on [illegible] characteristics of in-

great organisation or to love for the human race. It is not true that men, as a rule, risk life and pass weary days simply and solely for money or personal gain; it is not true that any great discovery or invention has been made by the spur of pecuniary reward. From the early days of Greek and Roman civilisation to the rise of the Christian Church or Mohammedism through the period of the great organisations of Catholicism and Islam; from the labours of Hypocrates and Pythagoras, through the noble work done by the great Arabians, by Roger Bacon, and Galileo, and others, onwards to the social and political enthusiasts, or the Newtons, Faradays, Simpsons, Darwins, of our own country, I challenge the champions of individualism to point to any single great discovery, great invention, or even great book, which has been made or written for the sake of pay.* Do doctors or surgeons strive the less to find useful drugs or to discover better methods of dealing with wounds, or fractures, or tumours, because by the unwritten law of the profession the man who patents a medicine or makes profit out of a new anæsthetic or splint is "boycotted" by his brethren for life? Why, we know well that in no profession is there such zeal for improvement, such enthusiasm for the general advance. The danger indeed there is that some forget what is due to the individual in their anxiety for the interests of the race. But it is needless to go further, the craze for sham individuality is but the last absurdity of a discredited school of thought which has shown itself incapable either to understand or to control even the middle-class society it worships. Those great social problems which are being solved as we discuss them, are being thus riddled by social organisation and social force.†

* also the opening pages of Chapter IV.

† rding to our present social arrangements scarcely any free

Looking outside this island we can trace in every direction the baneful effect of our capitalist production and the hopeless immorality of our existing commercialism. Force masters the world; but organised force should be used not to weaken and destroy the very basis of human happiness—physical well-being—but to strengthen and develop it for the common good. Landlordism and capitalism serve but to stunt and brutify abroad as at home. What is our connection with Ireland? what has it been but one record of organised ferocity and "legalised" rapine? Every famine in Ireland has been brought about by the drain of produce to this country. At the very time when people have been perishing miserably of starvation on the barren hill-sides and irreclaimable bogs to which they have been driven by their heartless oppressors, food far more than sufficient to keep them in comfort has been shipped over to us Englishmen, who have allowed our force to be used to keep the people in subjection to a few thousand landlords. There is no famine in Ireland, wrote Cobbett in the early part of the century; there was no famine in Ireland two years ago. The famines in Ireland are artificial famines, occasioned by the greed of those who own the soil. In India, capital and officialism act the part which the landlord class plays in Ireland. We are drawing from that unfortunate country year by year as interest on

scope is afforded for individuality. The careers of men and women are almost unalterably fixed before they are born. One man is born a peer and another a ploughman; and each must through life run in the groove that has been prepared for him, however unfitted for it his natural faculties may render him."—Fawcett on Pauperism, p. 156. I leave it to Mr Fawcett to reconcile this excellent description of our present "individuality" with his very tame and weak article on State Socialism and Land Nationalisation in *Macmillan*. In that article, by the way, Mr Fawcett spoke of the agitator Lassalle as founder of the *Internati*

railways, interest on debt, profits for transmission, pensions for work done and salaries in the country, agricultural produce to the amount of not less, certainly, than £30,000,000 a year—that is to say, the food of fifteen million human beings a year. Here at once is enough to account for the appalling increase of poverty and the deterioration alike of the soil and of the people in India.* Poverty tends to increase of population: increase of population tends to poverty where production is stationary. We extend the area of the vicious circle by our shameful economical greed, and English rule is ruining that great country for generations. In Bengal where the drain of produce is far less than elsewhere, we have put the people at the mercy of landowners as merciless as those of Ireland; whilst our Civil Courts have introduced new powers for the money-lending class, new terrors for the miserable labourer all over India. We are now obliged to check the *native* money-lender; but our upper and middle classes at home demand their yearly pound of flesh, though an ancient civilisation and a helpless people are destroyed thereby. The capitalism of the past twenty-five years with its pretended benefits to India has been more injurious than any invasion of Mogul hordes that ever poured down through the passes of the Himalayas. In India as in Ireland, the petty money-lender also stands ready to take advantage by process of law of what the government, or the landlord, or the large farmer may leave.

This problem of the pressure of the money-lender

* My articles on the Bankruptcy of India in the *Nineteenth Century* 1878 and March 1879 proved this conclusively. I have nd an Anglo-Indian official, I may add, from Sir John ds or downwards, who could hold his own for half-an- nt.

extends all over the civilised world.* The land-holder, the peasant-proprietor, the farmer, each and all feel the hand of the capitalist upon them. In India the land is "nationalised" over a large portion of the territory, yet the Deccan ryot in the grip of the remorseless soucar, the process of the courts conspiring with him to turn the peasant cultivator into a slave, is but typical of what is going on in more or less disguised shape under the operation of Jews, land-banks, Credits Fonciers, Mortgage Loan Companies in every European country, in America, and in the Colonies. Once more it is necessary to recall the truth that capital in its present sense means not the accumulation of a store for the common good, but of itself records in a word a whole series of social relations and social conventions which enables one class to prey upon another under pretence of conferring a benefit. It is not a question of individual and individual, it is a question of class and class. And the operation is world-wide. How little has the conquest of separate nationality benefited any people. The workers of Italy to-day are worse off than they were under Austrian oppression and petty tyranny.† Heavy taxes, military service, and pressure of capitalism have forced the people down to worse food and more exhausting labour. Germany has obtained her long-desired unity, and how does it fare with her? Since 1878 all combinations among the working-classes have been rendered illegal, their newspapers have been suppressed, the laws for the protection of women and children rendered nugatory,

* See as to Germany and Austria, Rodbertus' "Der heutigen Credit-Noth des Grundbezitzes," which deals with the question from a Conservative point of view.

† See article in the June number of the *Edinburgh*
an awful record from official reports of t

and competition has been carried on successfully with other countries at the expense of the ruinous enslavement of the producing class to the capitalists. The pressure of the land-banks in the poorer parts of the empire have meanwhile been severely felt by the cultivators. In Russia the break up of the Mir and the enfranchisement of the serfs have given the Jews greater opportunities; the condition of the mass of the people is, according to all official reports, worse physically than it was before the Emperor Alexander II.'s reforms. Even in France, the land of the peasant proprietor, the wretched food to which the peasant is driven, and the injury even he experiences from American competition are to be found revealed in official reports. The tale is dismal enough. In the United States itself, splendid as are its resources, and high as is the average of health and well-being among the people, even there the pressure of capitalism is beginning to tell seriously against the mass of the workers. The monopoly of the railroads which has developed from competition, the manner in which the great factory farms of the West crush the smaller producers by agreement with these same railroads, the operations of such corporations as the Central Pacific Railroad, the Standard Oil Well Company, or such individuals as Vanderbilt, Gould, Mackay, &c., are bringing about even in the great territory of the West that contrast between wealth and poverty which, unless forcibly checked, inevitably means degradation in the long run for the mass of the people. Already in New York, in Boston, in Philadelphia, in Chicago, in San Francisco, the same phenomena are to be observed that we can see nearer home. Bad pay, bad housing for heavy work, and girls driven to prostitution to eke out a starvation wage.

Monopoly by a class of land, of machinery, of capital, of credit, dominates the globe. But if the power of capitalism is thus world-wide, so also is the power of Socialism, which is slowly but surely organising for its overthrow. Throughout the civilised world the workers are learning slowly that they at least have no interests at variance. The commercial wars which are waged in Asia, in South Africa, in Cochin China, in Egypt, do not profit them ; the returns they bring to the capitalist class do but strengthen the domestic tyranny. In every country new associations of workers and thinkers are being formed to-day, and old associations are gaining strength, which have for their sole object to bring mankind together on the safe ground of a common interest. That there are different schools, some of which desire at once to resort to that destruction which modern explosives so readily lend themselves to, is undoubted. But the desire for common social organised action grows with working-class education, just as mere individual anarchism has its foundation in middle-class ideas and middle-class ignorance. It is true that the great International organisation of 1864 fell to pieces after the Paris Commune, but the basis of international agreement remains, and common action is being everywhere prepared for which cannot but have stupendous results. We are approaching the end of the century; 1889 is the centenary of the great French Revolution. The ideas of the enfranchisement of mankind from capitalist domination are everywhere abroad among the working men. In these days, when communication is so rapid and news spreads so fast, simultaneous action has a cumulative effect, economical, social, and political. It is childish to overlook class antagonism as the great factor in all human progress throughout history from the break-up of village communities to our

own time. Rather is it wise to reflect that the present capitalism, with its attendant mercenary militarism and dominant officialism, bears with it the certainty of early destruction; rather is it well to make ready, soberly and scientifically, for the Socialist organisation of production, exchange, and international relations which—however threatening the aspect of affairs at this moment—must inevitably take its place as the future of our race. It is in no spirit of narrow patriotism or petty jealousy of other peoples that I long to see my own country cut out the canker that gnaws away her prosperity, and stand forth before the world as the leader in a reorganisation which will mean enlightenment and happiness for the entire human race.



APPENDIX.

THE opinions of Rodbertus are almost unknown to English economists, and as his views are of importance to the study of modern socialist economy, I here give an abstract of his opinions translated from Dr Rudolph Meyer's learned work, "Der Emancipations kampf des Vierten Standes." In brief, Rodbertus' view was that, under unrestricted free trade and free contract, present social arrangements for the production and distribution of wealth result in giving to the workers in the shape of wages a smaller and smaller proportional share of the wealth created by improved methods of production. This position he thus maintains:—

1. The wages of labour, Rent, ground-rent, profit on capital are social facts and ideas which only exist because the individuals who are interested in them are united in a single society by the *lord* of division of labour.

2. Rent is all income which is received without a man's own labour solely on the ground of a possession.

3. Since there can be no income which has not been created beforehand by labour, Rent rests on two absolutely essential preliminary conditions. First, there can be no Rent unless labour produces at least more than is needed for the labourers to continue their labour—for it is impossible for anyone to have an income regularly without working himself, unless such a surplus exists. Secondly, there can be no Rent unless institutions exist which deprive the labourers wholly or in part of this surplus, and hand it over to those who do not labour—for the labourers are naturally always in possession of their product in the first place. That labour should yield such a surplus is due to economical causes which increase the productiveness of labour. That this surplus should wholly or partly be taken from the labourers and given to others is due to positive law,* which, as it is allied with physical force, enforces this abstraction by constant pressure.

* "Positive law" is a vile phrase, but it is an exact translation.

"4. Originally slavery, an institution whose development coincided with agriculture and landed property, practised this compulsion.* Labourers who produced such a surplus by their labour became slaves, and the master who owned the labourers as well as their product gave the slaves only just so much of it as was needful for them to carry on their work; the remainder, or the surplus, he took himself. If all the land of a country and all the capital in a country have become private property, landed property and capitalist property exercise similar compulsion on the free labourers. For this will have the same effect as slavery first, inasmuch as the product belongs not to the labourers, but to the owners of the land and capital; and secondly, because the labourers who own nothing as against the masters who own land and capital will be glad to take a part of the produce of their own labour to keep body and soul together, that is to carry on their labour. Thus, instead of the mastery of the slave-owner, the free-contract of the wage-labourer with his employer is introduced; but this contract is only nominally and not really free, and hunger fully makes up for the scourge. What then was called sustenance is now called wages.

"5. Rent and wages are thus shares into which the product is divided so far as it is income. Whence it follows that the larger one share is the smaller must the other be. If the Rent takes a larger share of the product, a smaller share must remain for wages. As one share varies in size, so must the other in inverse ratio. Since the size of the share of the product rules at the same time the rate of value, the expressions 'high' and 'low' and 'rise' and 'fall,' which are relative ideas, are used in this connection for the permanence and variation of Rent and of wages. We say Rent is high or rises, and wages are low or fall, if the one takes a greater or increasing share of the product, and consequently the other a smaller or diminishing share of it.

"6. Wages, however, are spoken of in another connection than as regards a high or low level, or with respect to a rise or a fall. The degrading conception of a necessary wage has been introduced into the theory of wages—a wage, namely, which contains in itself only just so much as the labourer needs to reproduce his labour force; and thus insensibly the free labourer is regarded from the point of view of a slave, who, in fact, costs just so much susten-

* Slavery existed in the nomadic state, and this Rodbertus should have recognised.

ance as a machine costs fuel. This amount of necessary wages is used as a scale, and people say that wages are high or rise, or on the contrary are low or fall, according as they approach to or recede from this point to the profit or loss of the labourer. Nevertheless, in this conception of a necessary wage it is not stated that the actual wages of labour cannot fall below this point, or that it must represent an equal quantity of provisions for all periods and all countries.

"7. The position and movement of the wages of labour must be distinguished in both these relations. Wages can in the one connection be high or rise, whilst in the other they may be low or fall, and *vice versa*. It depends solely on the degree of or the change in the productiveness of labour how far this is possible. If, for instance, the same quantity of labour produces more or increasing wealth, wages may, *considered as a share of the product*, be low or fall, whilst in relation to the point of necessary requirements they may be high or actually rise.

"8. Division of labour originally took the shape in which the lords of the soil were also masters of the capital. Capital includes raw material, incidental material, and tools; it is product which is used for further production; it is, when reduced to labour, *expended labour*. So long as the lords of the soil are also masters of the capital, the raw material is necessarily worked up, whether by slaves or free labourers, in the same service of the landowner; the landowner is at the same time a 'manufacturer,' and generally a wholesale dealer in the finished articles into the bargain. In such a case the *entire Rent* falls to the lot of one combined owner of land and capital, and no distinction is made in general between ground-rent and capital-rent. This arrangement predominated in Greek and Roman antiquity, and is one reason why the rich region of political economy remained undiscovered by the ancients; because they never had the conception of capital in its economical meaning, but only as capital in the shape of money (geld-capital).

"9. But division of labour develops itself, because capital has by degrees other masters than the land, and because in this way the raw material which is produced by one set of labourers in the service of the landowner now passes into the possession of the owner of the capital, and is worked up by labourers in his employ; the Rent therefore is divided, and one part falls to the share of the owner of the raw material, namely the landowner,

the other to the owner of the capital who has had the raw material worked up. The separation between town and country, the legal division of 'city affairs' from agriculture first called into being the distinction between landlord and capitalist, and consequently the separation of ground-rent and capital-rent as an all-pervading decisive rule transforming the division of labour.

"10. This division into ground-rent and 'capital-rent' takes place in proportion to the value which the raw material bears to the value which is added to the raw material through the labour (manufacture or transportation) set to work by the capitalist, in other words, in proportion to the share of the value of the completed product which the raw material takes. The smaller the value of the raw material in proportion to the manufactured article, or the reverse, the smaller or larger is the share of the total return which falls to the share of the raw material, and consequently the larger or the smaller the share of the total return which belongs to the manufactured article.

"11. The capitalists call the last share profit on capital. This profit they reckon in proportion to the amount of the capital—or usually in proportion to the hundred, that is so much per cent. This proportion expresses the rate of profit on capital. Thus we have at the same time a measure of the profit of all capital (capital-vermögens) employed. No one will employ capital where it does not obtain a return at this rate; and when capital is needed for the production of the raw material, a deduction of the ordinary rate of profit on capital must be made from the share of the return which belongs to the raw material in proportion to the amount of capital employed at that rate. If there is then a portion still over that is called ground-rent, because the landowner receives it only as landowner, apart altogether from his position as a capitalist or a labourer. And his land is then usually reckoned on its capital value, or the rent is capitalised.

"12. Since the higher the profit on capital the larger percentage is reckoned as the share of the capital, that percentage must rise or fall as the value of the raw material is lower or higher. For the value of the raw material which the capitalists buy with their capital is reckoned in the capital on which the share of the Rent as profit, at so much per cent., is calculated.

"13. If the profit on capital is high the ground-rent must be low.

"14. The relation of value between the raw material and the manufactured article only determines the proportion of the division of the Rent between the landowner and the capitalist as ground-rent and profit on capital. No rise or fall in the value of the raw material or of the completed product by itself can raise or lower the profit on the capital or raise or lower the ground-rent unless a similar movement takes place in the opposite direction in the other share of the Rent.

"15. Such a change in one share of the Rent which does not affect the other, or a change in similar sense in both shares of the Rent—as, for instance, a rise of the ground-rent without a fall of profit on capital, or a rise of ground-rent and of profit on capital (we are speaking here always of shares in the product)—can only take place if the proportion of division between wages and Rent changes generally, if the Rent generally, that is, rises or falls.

"16. It is clear that a simultaneous rise of both shares in Rent, the ground-rent and profit on capital, or a rise in one portion of the Rent which is not obtained at the cost of the other, since both can only occur in consequence of a rise in the Rent as a whole, can therefore only result at the expense of the wages of labour. The wages of labour must in this case be limited to a smaller share of the product, must be changed in the contrary direction, as one or the other or both portions of the Rent must fall in the case stated above. Whether also it must fall at the same time as a share of the product in relation to the point of necessary subsistence depends solely on whether the productiveness of labour has increased or not.

"17. If the productiveness of labour has not risen, and both or one of the two shares of the Rent rise, the wages of labour must fall in both connections alike as share of the product and in relation to the wage-point of necessary subsistence.

"18. In the same way if the wages of labour as a share of the product are modified, this must produce the opposite effect on one or both shares of the Rent. If a modification of the wages of labour takes place without an accompanying modification of productiveness, the ground-rent and profit on capital into which the Rent has hitherto been divided will to that extent be advantaged or injured; for the relation between the raw material and the manufactured article cannot have changed on its side through a change in the remuneration of labour without a simultaneous alteration in productiveness. If the former modification in the wages

of labour is accompanied by modification of productiveness, for example if the wages of labour have fallen whilst the productiveness has risen, it will thence depend in which proportion the raw material and the manufactured article have shared in this increase of productiveness, and that share of the Rent alone or chiefly profits, from the increase of the Rent on the whole in consequence of the fall in the wages of labour, in which the increase of productiveness has not taken place at all, or has done so in the smallest degree.

"19. So far only the effects of the changes of the different shares in the product—of the wages of labour, of ground-rent, and of profit on capital, and at the same time similar and changing productiveness—have been considered without reference to a change in the total forces of production. A change in the total productive forces—that is, in the number of labourers—apart from the change in productiveness and the proportionate shares in the production taken by the labourer, the landowner, and the capitalist, only changes the total amount of the national production, and therewith only the total of the wages of labour and of both portions of the Rent, without exerting any influence upon the relations which the shares of the labourer, of the landlord, and of the capitalist have to one another. More or less ground-rent is taken according as the total of the productive forces expended has increased or diminished; more or less profit on capital is deducted. For since the productiveness and the relative shares in the product of the labourer, the landowner, and capitalist are taken as stationary, the newly developed wealth-production through increased population, is divided only in the old fashion.

"20. The increase or diminution of the Rent, however, in consequence of the increase or diminution of the productive forces, has therefore apparently a different influence on the ground-rent from that which it has on the profit on capital. It raises or depresses, indeed, the ground-rent, but not the profit on capital. For the increased or diminished ground-rent must always be reckoned on an equally large area, since the country and the estates do not grow, but are confined within fixed boundaries. The increased or diminished profit on capital is on the contrary calculated on the increased or diminished capital, without which the assumed deduction from or addition to the product as a whole cannot be considered, and the rate of profit cannot rise or fall, but only more or less profit on capital can be received in the nation. If therefore the ground-rent of a particular piece of land can rise for the same reasons for which the profit on capital can

rise as well, namely, because the Rent as a whole can rise at the cost of the labourer's participation in the product, as also because the one share of the Rent can rise at the expense of the other, the ground-rent can so rise for yet a third reason—the total increase of Rent—whilst this is not the case with respect to the profit on capital. This last reason is perhaps the most powerful cause of a rise of ground-rent.

"21. The separation of the rights of property does not alter these principles of Rent. The ground-rent is divided between various parties only in proportion to the positive legal relation. Just as little does the intermediate position of the contractor alter the above principles. The farmer obtains only the profit on his capital, and if he has concluded a profitable lease, a part of the ground-rent at the same time. No regular interest can arise from any enterprise in any other way than by profit on capital. I am not here speaking of capital lent on mortgage; the interest on this is only a product of the ground-rent, the impropriation of a plot of land only a purchase of rent.

"22. The wages of labour can equally change as well as portion of the product, as in relation to the 'wage-point' of absolute necessaries; they can change in both relations independently and even opposed to one another, the wages can fall for instance as a fraction of the product, and nevertheless rise in relation to the point of absolute necessaries. If a settled proportional share is generally assumed between wages of labour and Rent, both portions of the Rent, ground-rent and profit on capital, taken as shares in the product can only change in opposite senses; as much as the one rises or falls, so much must the other fall or rise. If one portion of the Rent changes without the other being affected thereby, or if they both change equally, this change can only take place if a change in the opposite sense takes place at the same time in the wages of labour; a rise in the ground-rent, [for] example—as a share of the product—without a fall in the profit on capital, must reduce the wages of labour as a share of the [product]. An increase of the Rent in consequence of the increase [of the] total product raises, however, the ground-rent also with[out] lowering the rate of profit on capital and the wages of [labour] as share of the product, and it is also a conceivable case [that] in spite of these various changes that profit on capital [and] wages, the latter, however, as share of the product,—[the] ground-rent may simultaneously rise, then namely,

when the ground-rent falls as share of the product, and this fall tells to the advantage of the other shares provided that this fall is more than made up in consequence of the total increase of Rent.

"It is only necessary to grasp this indisputable relation between Wages, Interest, and Rent to comprehend the utter hollowness of the declaration of liberal economists about the harmony between Capital and Labour. Capital wants high interest, the landowner high ground-rent, the labourer high wages—and nevertheless one of them can only see his wish fulfilled at the cost of the others."

Passing over the sections which deal with exchange, market value, &c., Dr Meyer takes up Rodbertus' conclusion prior to the later paragraphs.

Rodbertus says, "Positive law lays down that land and capital belong just as much to private individuals as the forces of labour to the labourer. Hence the labourers are compelled as a rule, in order only to be able to produce, to enter into an engagement with the possessors of the land and the capital, and to share the product with them. A false and superficial abstraction has indeed inferred backwards special and diverse productive services as rendered respectively by labour, land, and capital, in explanation of which landowners and capitalists participate in that enforced division; and then, further, it has been conceived that the assumed product of this combination is the resultant of their various services in co-operation. But who cannot see that this is the most flagrant *petitio principii* that a science has ever been chargeable with, and we may add the most pernicious error through which the human reason has ever had to make its way? The above combination does not change one atom the natural productive elements of all wealth, but only removes a social obstacle to production—the arbitrary dead-weight of the possessors of land and capital—and removes this by a division of the product. In the form, therefore, which the division of labour actually takes to-day, product is exchanged against product as the economists tell us, but the purchasing power which each sharer possesses, is not, as the economists have falsely concluded, regulated by the value of his product, but according to his share in the product.

"29. In a society such as is here assumed, and such as to-day actually exists, the shares of the labourer, landowner, and capitalist in the product [illegible] not regulated by social foresight by a rational social law, b[illegible] effects of the unregulated exchange, or b[illegible] social laws. It thus depends on

the chance of the market how high shall be the share of each class in the national product. The relative shares of the landowner and capitalist are indeed fixed by the relative value of the raw material or manufactured product, and this tends towards the cost of the respective products, or according to the law of the productiveness of the respective labours; only for this reason that the supreme economical good, the principle of all products, labour, has become an object of exchange is the division between rent-owners and labourers sacrificed to the power of exchange. A similar degrading conception to that which allowed the wages of labour to be valued according to the necessary subsistence, or as the requisites for a machine, has also spoken with reference to the labour thus turned into a commodity of a 'natural price' or of the 'cost' as in reference to the product itself; and this natural price, this cost of labour, has been fixed at the production of such goods as may be necessary in order always to bring the labour back again on to the market, that is to place the labourer in the position to propagate his species. What a silly indescribable contradiction is the conception of that political economy which settles the labourers in their rightful position as the arbiters of the fate of society, and at the same time always treats them economically as mere commodities. For in this connection the labourers are the labour.

"30. The division of the national production according to the 'natural' laws of commerce involves the result that with the rising productiveness of labour the wages of the labourer should be an ever smaller share of the product. Since the labourers, even if they could perceive how through a changed combination of the same simple operations on their part their labour becomes constantly more productive, are not economically in the position to cope with their employers on this point, that their labour in consequence of its productiveness, and in consequence of the addition to this productiveness ought to be reimbursed in exchange. The motives of exchange for them are those which fix the disposal of their property, labour, at the lowest point; and so the highest economical property, the basis of all production, becomes a common and almost worthless commodity. The labourers own several [illegible] of labour but nothing more, and in the front rank of the [illegible] usiness their own hunger and the suffering of their [illegible] against them. Hence they easily dispose of their [illegible] their most painful privations are satisfied by this

[illegible] that they get amounts to only so much as to give them the strength to set to work again; that is to say, to be able [illegible] to supply their most pressing necessities. Only [illegible] wages amount to less—this is the result of experience—[illegible] wages are so small that in carrying on their labour they are obliged to sacrifice their actual strength, do they idle and prefer to steal, from a deep natural instinct that under such relations the moral conditions of social existence are violated against them. But the amount which suffices to supply the direst needs is a quantitative product and no fixed proportion; and indeed in the course of the life of a labourer in the same country and on the average of years is about the same quantity.

"31. The more populous the country, the more productive on that account the labour and the greater the individual freedom, the more, in a completely unrestrained system of exchange, are the labourers compelled to work 'cheap,' since more and more on these accounts is the labour assimilated to a commodity which comes under the law of competition, and of an injurious competition; and therefore for this reason the contractors are placed in the position to give work to those who ask least. As if the contractors gave work and did not receive it.

"32. If every sharer in the exchange always received the entire product of his labour, if his power of purchase consisted in the market value of the entire product, as it is well known the political economists of the school of Ricardo as well as of Say-Bastiat used falsely to assert, then no increase of productiveness could bring about a glut of one commodity or of all commodities until all co-operators had received enough thereof to satisfy their needs, until more of them had been produced than generally was required in the society. For since the market value of the product is in inverse ratio to the productiveness, the market value of the product of each, according to the above assumption, remains the same for those whose product has been produced with an increased scale of productiveness, and consequently therefore its purchasing power is the same as with those in whose case this has not happened. Every sharer would be able to buy a larger quantity of that product where productiveness had risen in the proportion in which [illegible] had risen, and the undiminished purchasing power of each [illegible] be able so long to control the increased [illegible] of pr[illegible]e to the increased productiveness, w[illegible] [illegible]idual were satisfied, until he

would not be able to purchase more, even if he could purchase more. In this case, therefore, the purchasing power in society remains always equal to its productiveness or so much value in use as society produced so much value in exchange and so much purchasing power it would also possess, until all the needs of each co-operator in the production were satisfied. Over-production could therefore only exist when the members of the society had already fully satisfied their wants, whilst the present commercial crises consist precisely in the fact that at the very time of glut four-fifths or five-sixths of society are in want.

"The increase of productiveness would have the same result if indeed the product were divided as it is to-day into three shares, but the share of each individual were to remain a fixed portion. According to this assumption also the purchasing power of each participator in the exchange would remain the same no matter how the productiveness might rise, and overproduction could likewise only occur when the wants of all participators were satisfied. . . .

"Only if neither of these two assumptions fits, if the product is not simply shared in three fixed portions, but according to the 'natural' laws of self-regulating exchange, the share of the working classes, that is of the great majority of society, does not remain a fixed unchangeable fraction of the product, but on the contrary is a smaller fraction of the product in precisely the same proportion as the productiveness increases, then this happy consequence of the increase of productiveness cannot follow. For in this third assumption purchasing power and productiveness remain no longer in proportionate relation. The purchasing power of the greater part of society reduces itself much more in relation to the rising productiveness, and society is placed in the position to produce utility value which is no longer value in exchange and power of purchase; while further, the greater number have their wants unsatisfied on that account.

"33. It is manifest that where and when the 'natural' laws of exchange have such effects, and no rational laws interpose an obstacle to these effects, necessarily there must be what are to-day called glut and pauperism. There must then necessarily arise [illegible] phenomena so remarkable as these, that the pro- [illegible] of society may yet rise so high, may rise so high [illegible] mbers could live in luxury from its product, never- [illegible] count, and precisely for this reason the majority

is plunged in the depths of poverty, the minority lives in excessive luxury. There must be produced in consequence of the inseparable connection between political economy and the legal and political development, which at the same time brings with it an ever greater equality before the law, and greater political freedom, there must be produced, I say, that fatal contradiction in society, that the more equal and the more free all its members become before the law and politically, the more unequal and dependent are the majority of the working classes economically. Then such monstrosities as commercial crises and pauperism must arise. As concerns the commercial crisis this must be so, because since the purchasing power of the majority of society, of the working classes, is always as a whole less as the productiveness rises, over-production must always arise sooner than the wants of society are fully satisfied. And as concerns pauperism, this must happen, because the material claims of the majority of society, the working classes, are continually enhanced, their desires are continually inflamed by the increase of the wealth of the minority, whilst the amount of income of those whose economical position is ruined falls. It must come then to such incredible nonsense as this, that whilst the majority of society languish in poverty, they are nevertheless not allowed to exert their productive forces to their full extent by a long way, because if they did the smaller section would be plunged into poverty.

"34. In this 'natural' law of a perfectly unfettered exchange lies the key to the economical problem of the present time. The assumptions from which such phenomena as pauperism and commercial crises follow as natural consequences come forth to-day in actual practice, and society has enacted no rational laws to keep in check the practical results of these now practical assumptions. Productiveness has increased in a very high degree, and if not in so great a degree in the production of raw material as in manufacture and transport, nevertheless even there to a very considerable extent. The national product has also greatly increased, through the increase of productive forces in consequence of the growing population. The wages of labour, on the contrary, in Europe, where they are not favourably influenced by colonial relations, as in North America or Australia, but have developed from the wage relations of the serf (through much denser population, and at the same time through the land being entirely occupied), wages in such conditions are nowhere much or far above the point of

absolute necessaries. Further, the above-mentioned social relations have developed themselves in such manner that they have exerted a constantly increasing pressure. Whence the conclusion follows that the existing form of division of the national product cannot continue. The wages of labour have, in fact, become in Europe an ever smaller relative share of the product. . . . This form of division of the national product has therefore also inflicted pauperism and commercial crises upon society. They have both become facts as real as that division and its premises. No optimism is blinder, no selfishness more narrow, than that which is not shaken out of its slumber by the violence with which these phenomena have taken shape, and manifested their universal significance. Those who deny them we need not count. The dispute is no longer about their existence, but about their remedy, and chiefly only against the opinion which assumes their absolute necessity in the same way that social anomalies are assumed to be God's will."

Rodbertus goes on to assert that society can never permit this pauperism and these crises to continue. His proposed remedies are, however, in nowise of a revolutionary character. They are—(1) a regular scale of wages and a normal working day; (2) State circulating capital in some such general shape as labour notes, together with a reasoned regulation of production in the collective interest; and (3) general centres of distribution in the form of State co-operative stores. Rodbertus was, in fact, essentially a conservative; and living a retired life as a landed proprietor he devoted himself to working out, from his point of view, the problems of his time undisturbed, as far as possible, by the movement of the world without. His principal theories were put forward as early as 1850, and his influence upon Lassalle has already been spoken of. Rodbertus' correspondence with that agitator, as well as with other economists, is of high importance. His pupil and the editor of his letters, Dr R. Meyer, argues that as Europe no longer has a monopoly of machinery, and is brought into competition with the cheap food and wares produced in America and Russia, or China and India, but especially in America, the assumption of rising productiveness in Europe no longer holds good. The total income to be divided up will be constantly less per head on an increasing population, whilst the plutocracy take an increasing share. *Europa verarmt*, "Europe is being impoverished" cries Meyer. But whatever

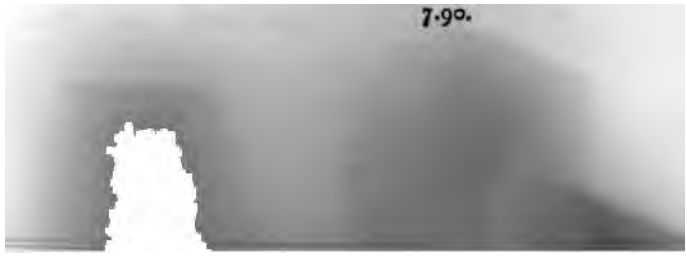




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FISHING INDUSTRY, 224.
FLAX, 42; (*See* Linen).
FLOUR, Import of, 206.
FLOUR MILLING, 207, 374.
FLYING SHUTTLE, 51, 61.
FOOD STUFFS, Exports of, 10; Import of 177, 200, 362, 372, 373; within British Empire, 339.
FOURNESS, 72.
FRAME WORK KNITTERS, 58, 87*n*.
FRANCE, 2, 4, 5, 108, 109, 138; Area of, 258; Birth Rate of, 159; British Machinery in, 76, 77; British Workmen in, 75; Canals of, 248; Capital in, 34; Child Labour in, 128; Coal Output, 161, 165; Colonies of, 3, 5; Colonial Trade of, 35 and *n*; Cost of Living in, 170; Cotton Statistics of, 160, 161; Export Trade of, 26, 30, 34, 35; Home Work in, 61, 64; Free Trade in, 132; Growth of Towns in, 219; Industrial Position of, 3, 19, 26, 33, 35, 37, 145; Iron in, 20; Iron Output of, 161; Labour in, 22, 33, 122; Machinery in, 36, 66; Model for England, 146; National Policy of, 171; Population of, 3, 26, 153; Railways in, 130, 161, 192, 253; and Raw Cotton, 40, 41, 43; Rivalry with England, 41, 42, 43, 145, 146, 147; Roads of, 35, 239; Shipping of, 160; Subsidies to Shipping, 305; Trade Statistics of, 159, 162; Wages in, 33; Wool Consumption, 161; Raw Wool, 39, 43.
FREE TRADE, and Agriculture, 303; Continental, 131; Deviations from, 335; Establishment of, 130, 131; Importance of, 132; Motives for, 120, 127, 131; Policy of, 116; and Trusts, 153; (*See also* Corn Laws, Navigation Acts, Tariff).
FRENCH REVOLUTION, 83, 102, 175, 176; Influence of, 6, 7, 8; Destructive Effect of, 34, 35.
FRENCH WARS (*see* War and Napoleon)
FRIENDLY SOCIETIES, Funds of, 169.

G

GERMANY, 2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 19, 24, 31, 102*n*, 138; Area of, 258; Banking in, 145; Birth and Death Rate, 159; Cartels in, 208; Coal Output, 10, 161, 165; Colonial Possessions of, 326; Commercial Treaties with, 147; Cotton Statistics, 160-161; Divisions of, 139; in Eighteenth Century, 4; Emigration from, 228, 229; Flax from, 41; Growth of Towns, 218, 219; Industrial Development of, 36, 37, 145 188; Influence on Great Britain, 147, 156; Iron Manufacture of, 146, 188; Iron and Steel Statistics, 160-162; Locomotives in, 192; Mercantile Marine of, 160, 313, 305, 306, 307; Paternalism of, 173; Population of, 159;
GERMANY—*contd.*
Effect of Railways on, 7, 187, 191; Numbers travelling by Railway, 215; Rivalry with Great Britain, 117, 145, 146, 178, 310; Trade Unions in, 24; Wheat Imports, 375; Wheat Export to England, 373; Wheat Production, 372; Woollen Statistics, 160, 161.
GILCHRIST-THOMAS PROCESS, 144, 146.
GIRARD, 57.
GLADSTONE 130, 132, 386.
GLASGOW, 59, 80, 103.
GOLD DISCOVERIES 136.
GORGAS, COLONEL, 347*n*.
GOTT, 52, 99.
GREAT BRITAIN, Area of, 258; 1815-1914, 177*f*; Capital of, 34; Causes of Success of, 162*ff*; Change in Character of, 104; Colonial Possessions, 1815, 178; Effect of Colonies on, ; Industrial Development of, 34, 35, 42; Colonial Trade of in Eighteenth Century, 35; Effect of Inventions on, 183, 391; Effect on the World, 108; Emigration from, 228 (*See* Emigration); Export Trade in Eighteenth Century, 26, 27, 30, 35; Import Trade, Eighteenth Century, 30, 35; Individualism of, 171*ff*; Investments Abroad, 167; Loans, 213, 214; Prosperity of, 136, 137, 138; and Railways, 192, 235-290; and Shipping, 291-313; (*See also* United Kingdom); France, Rivalry with; Germany, Rivalry with; British Empire and Colonies).
GREAT POWERS, 2.
GUADELOUPE, 42.

H

HAMBURG, 46, 48.
HANDLOOM WEAVERS, Earnings of, 87, 119*n*; Efficiency of, 100; Food of 87; Homes of, 84, 86.
HARGREAVES, 48, 76.
HARCOURT, L., 328*n*, 345, 353.
HARKORT, 188.
HIGHS, 48.
HOLLAND, 3, 4, 5, 36, 109, 146; Difficulty in Obtaining Raw Material, 46.
HOME WORK, 39, 56, 58, 61, 62, 63, 64 :2, 85, 87; Cheapness of, 119; and Children, 91; Disadvantages of, 65.
HOME WORKERS, 90, 96, 103; Earnings of, 64; (*See also* Hand Loom Weavers, Women, Children).
HORROCKS, 55.
HOSIERY, 57, 58.
HOUSING, 64, 67, 156; Rural, 377-379.
HUDSON, GEORGE, 270.
HULL, 207.
HUNTSMAN, 28, 69.

I

IMPERIAL BUREAU OF ENTOMOLOGY, 340.
IMPERIAL BUREAU OF MYCOLOGY, 340.
IMPERIAL DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE 348, 340, 350*n*.

IMPERIAL FEDERATION, 323.
IMPERIAL MINERAL RESOURCES BUREAU, 340.
IMPERIAL PREFERENCE, Financial, 334; in Communications, 331, 332; (*see also* Tariff Preference, Shipping and Colonies).
IMPERIAL SHIPPING BOARD, 338.
IMPERIAL TRADE COMMISSIONERS, 148, 336.
IMPERIAL WAR CONFERENCES, 314, 331, 355, 359.
INCOME TAX, 116, 120, 131, 132, 137*n*, 158; Double, 334.
INDIA, 3, 5, 22, 146, 179; Changing Position of in the Empire, 354; Cotton Goods from, 43, 44; Discovery of, 2; Emigration from, 231; 354-357; (*see also* Colonies and Asiatic Labour); Exports to, 30; High Commissioner for, 354; Inclusion in Imperial Conference, 331; Population of, 328; and Preferential System, 335, 353; and Railways, 187; Reaction of on England, 149; and Scientific Agriculture, 350, 352; Trade of, 196; Tariff Autonomy, 354; Wheat from, 202, 373.
INDIVIDUALISM, British, 171.
INDUSTRIAL CHEMISTRY, 21, 59.
INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, Causes of in Great Britain, 26*ff*; and Colonial Trade, 30, 42; Date of, 78; Effects of, 79*ff*, 101*ff*; Features of, 107, 108; and Middle Classes, 98-100; Periods of, 22, 25; Slow Progress of, 61; Special Complications in Great Britain, 108; Spread of, 22, 25; and Transport, 22; World Effect of, 108, 391-392.
INLAND NAVIGATIONS (*see* Canals).
INSPECTORS (*see* Factory Inspectors); in France, 108*n*.
INSURANCE, for Accidents, 114; Sickness, 114; Health, 157; Unemployment, 157.
ITALY, 41; Emigration from, 229, 230.
IRISH LABOURERS as Factory Hands, 63, 86; as Railway Navvies,
IRELAND, 381-390; Commercial Restrictions on, 382; Congested Districts, 154, 389; Co-operative Movement in, 154, 388; Cultivated Area of, 384; Estates Commissioners in, 388; Department of Agriculture, 153, 154, 388; Emigration from, 228, 384, 390; English Influence, 382; Evictions in, 385, 386; Fair Rents in, 153, 386, 387; Famine in, 383; Financial Advances to, 174, 175; Improvements in Agricultural Methods, 389; Land Commission in, 389; Land Legislation for, 384, 386, 387, 388; Large Farms in, 384, 385; Land Purchase in, 153, 387; Linen Yarn from, 45, 46; Peasantry in, 383; Peculiarities of Land System, 382; Population of, 97, 383; Size of Farms, 384; Spinning in, 57; Wool from, 39.
IRON, 7, 10, 19, 21; Comparative Statistics of, 160; Exports of, 141, 160; for Machinery, 29; Import of, 69; Industry, Migration of, 69.
IRON MANUFACTURE, 20, 26; and Coal, 128; in Germany, 146; and Hot Blast, 78; Inventions in, 28; Location of, 20; Effect of Railways on, 19, 188, 190; and Rails, 71; Smelting of, 69, 70; Ships, 137, 298; (*See also* Steel, Machinery, Engineering.
IRON MASTERS, 69.
IRON ORE, Import of, 143, 165; Smelting of, 69, 70.
IRON, PIG, Production of, 144*n*, 188.
IRON TRADE DEPRESSION in 143; and Railways, 135, 136; and Renewals, 19, 136, 137; (*See also* Germany, France, United States and Railways)
IRONWORKS, British, in France, 75.
ISMAILA, 347*n*.

J

JAMAICA, 312, 319, 321, 353.
JAPAN, 311, 326.
JENNY (*see* Spinning).
JOINT STOCK COMPANIES, 23, 25, 113; Capital of, 113, 130, 135*n*; Formation of, 129, 130; Legislation for, 114; Numbers of, 113*n*; and Shipping, 291, 304.

K

KAY, 54.
KENNET AND AVON CANAL, 247.

L

LABOUR, Change in Character of, 10, 89, 90; Combinations, 11, 25 (*See* Trade Unions); Condition of, 157; Comparison with French, 122, 170; International Comparisons, 24, 170; Improvement in Condition of, 168, 170; and French Wars, 122; Legislation for, 13, 114, 149, 150, 151; New Aim of Labour Legislation, 150; Movements, 25, 133; Effect of Labour Movement on Legislation, 157; Labour Party, 153, 157; and Railways, 25, 197, 281, 285, 286; Scarcity of, 32.
LAISSEZ-FAIRE, Policy of, 12, 106, 115, 178; Abandonment of, 117, 147; Exceptions to, 116; and Germany, 156; Limitations of, 117; and Railways, 156; Reaction from, 147*ff*, 156, 184; Success of, 172; Theory of, 127; (*See also* Free Trade).
LAND (*see* Agriculture, Farms).
LAND PURCHASE (*see* Ireland).
LANCARS, 221.
LEEDS, 52, 71, 73, 80.
LEEDS AND LIVERPOOL CANAL, 247.
LEICESTER, 31.
LEPROY, 349*n*.
LEVANT, Cotton from, 41, 46.
LINEN, 32, 40; Factories, Numbers in, 59; Machinery in Spinning, 59; Power Looms for, 55, 58; Yarn, 41, 45, 46, 48, 57.
LINER, Shipping, 301.

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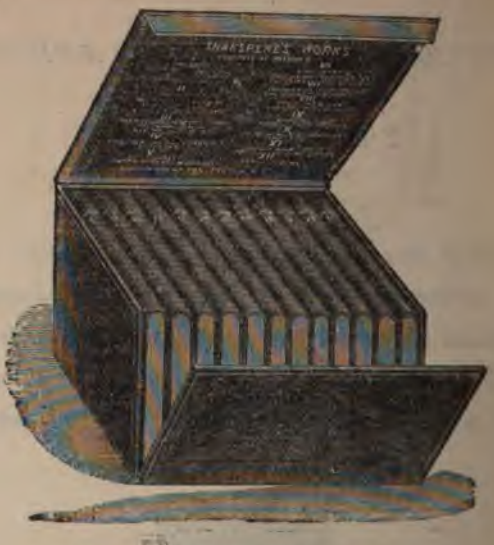
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APPENDIX

THE RAILWAY ACT OF 1921*

A NEW era in railway history was begun with the reorganisation of the British railway system after the War. The Act of 1921 hastened the process of amalgamation, provided a new experiment in the control of railways by the State and set up a new method of settling wages and other disputes in which railway workers were involved.

There were still in 1921 no less than 214 separate railway undertakings in Great Britain.† Of these 121 were to be combined into four groups, so as to create larger units. These larger units were expected to show great economies in working, in the building of railway equipment and in the handling of traffic. The highest group of railways outside the four combines was formed by the urban and suburban railways of the London area, worked mainly by electricity and confined chiefly to passenger traffic.

The idea was that each of the four groups was to be a unit which would give economic working.

The railways were amalgamated into (1) a Southern, (2) a Western, (3) a Midland, North-Western and West Scottish and (4) an Eastern, North-Eastern and East Scottish group. The old historical names such as the London and North-Western dating from 1846, the Midland from 1844, the Great-Northern from 1845, and the London and South-Western from 1839, all disappeared and only the Great Western retained the name it inherited from 1835.

*Grouping under the Railways Act, 1921; Acworth *Economic Journal*, March, 1923. Communications (Resources of the Empire Series). W. T. Stephenson, *Railways of the United Kingdom*, *p.* 173.

†The present number is eighty-eight of which thirty-three are not working Companies. Further of the fifty-five, four form the Underground Group and ten are joint lines, the property of the Big Four.

According to the Act the companies were to settle their own terms of amalgamation and present them to an Amalgamation Tribunal. Should they fail to agree the Tribunal would itself undertake the task of combining the companies. As a matter of fact the amalgamation of over a thousand millions sterling of capital and of powers and lines which had grown up as we have seen in the most haphazard fashion, was carried out by the companies themselves, under the stimulus of the Act and approved by the Tribunal.* Competition was not, however, abolished. In the amalgamation each of the big four absorbed other companies which had extensions into the territory of its rival, and as long as two companies run to Exeter and Plymouth, or two lines serve London and Manchester, so long will competition exist. The competition really centres round the towns and the industrial centres, so that while the bulk of the territory is non-competitive, the bulk of the traffic is still competitive, as Sir William Acworth pointed out. A limitation of this competition by agreement seems inevitable in the future.

Instead of having to apply to Parliament whenever such an agreement is arrived at, as was necessary in the olden days, with the result that such an agreement was usually refused in order to maintain competition, a much simpler and cheaper procedure has been substituted in an appeal to the Ministry of Transport, which is empowered to sanction such a proceeding by the issue of an Order. Thus the Ministry of Transport has control over all future agreements regulating competition.

It is interesting to see how Parliament, after doing its best for over three quarters of a century to keep alive and stimulate competition, has now completely abandoned that attitude and has itself forced on amalgamations and made the path easy for further cessation of competition.

*The chief exception was the Caledonian Railway.

The benefit of the savings which it is hoped will ensue under the new grouping is to go as to 20 per cent. to the Company making the saving, and 80 per cent. to the customers in reduction of rates.

The old statutory maximum rates, above which the companies could not go, but below which they might vary their rates, subject to control if they wished to move them upwards, are now a thing of the past. New schedules of rates have been drawn up after examination and will be fixed by a new body, the Railway Rates Tribunal. This is a business body, the function of which is to fix rates that shall actually be paid. It is to fix the charges at such an amount as shall yield to the companies the standard net revenue of 1913, with sundry named additions, provided they work with efficiency and economy. The companies may only lower the standard rates by exceptional rates varying between 5 and 40 per cent. of the standard rate. The right of appeal by the trader, either for or against an exceptional rate, is maintained, and the Tribunal has to review all the exceptional rates and standard charges at intervals. The whole system of returns, accounts and statistics has been overhauled and more information is now available as to the cost of working the railways and the sources of their revenues.

The vast task of classifying the goods and of fixing the new standard rates was thrashed out between the Railway Rates Committee and the Traders Co-ordinating Committee. It then went to the Railway Rates Advisory Committee and on to the Railway Rates Tribunal, which in 1926 is concerned with the final fixing of the rates.

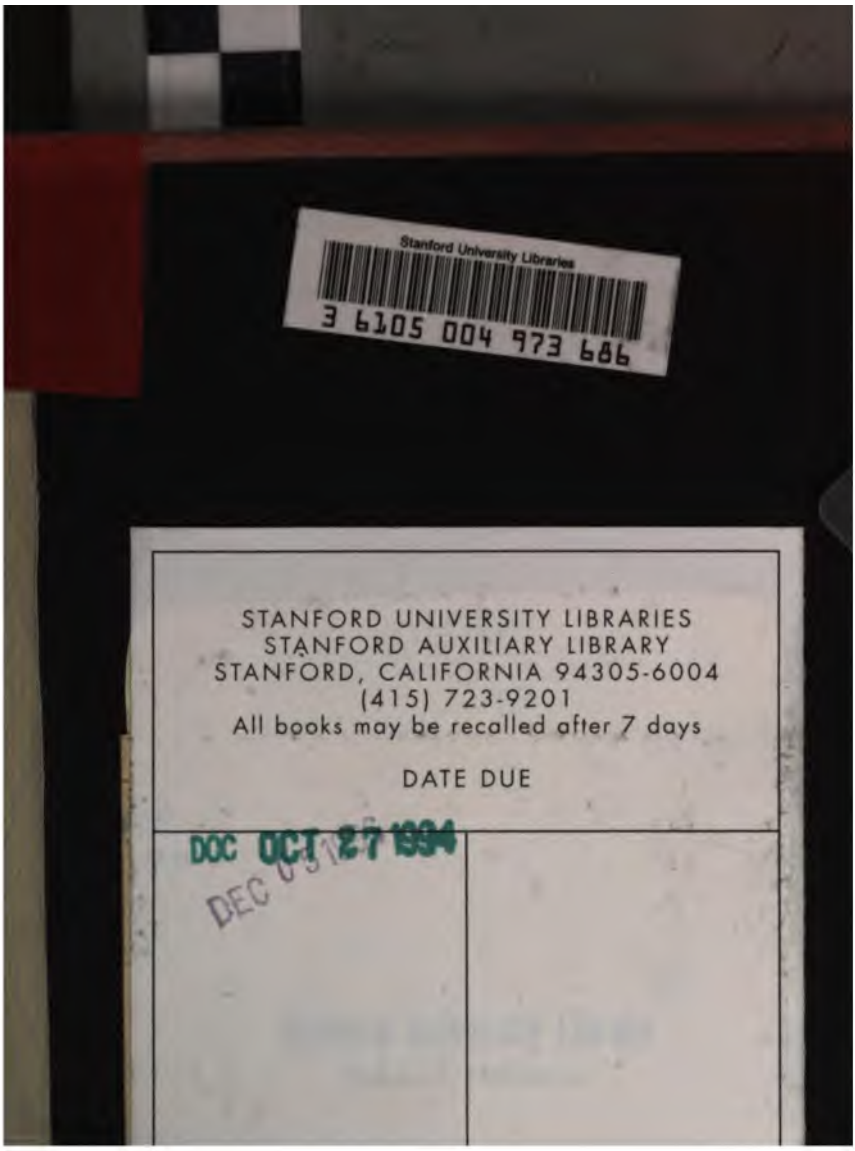
In addition to these changes a new body was set up to deal with labour questions—the National Wages Board. On it are represented the Railway Companies, the railway workers and the railway customers, i.e., the public, under an independent Chairman. Below this body each company has a series of Councils and there is a Central Wages Board on

which the Companies and the employees alone are represented. The final appeal lies, however, to the National Wages Board. Thus the wages and conditions of employment are no longer left to the companies to decide, but in the last resort the public, too, is brought in and its wishes considered, so that the exploitation of the public by an industry in which there can be no foreign competition is avoided. There is, however, no compulsion on the companies or the employees to obey the award, and strikes have taken place by bodies of workers who refused to accept the decision of the National Board. How important labour remuneration is in the costs of working may be seen from the fact that 120 millions sterling, or 52 per cent. of the total receipts of the railways in 1924 was absorbed by salaries and wages, and 47 millions, or 20.5 per cent. went to the remuneration of capital.*

Thus the Act of 1921 is yet another attempt to provide an alternative to state railways.†

*Ry. Returns, 1924.

†I am indebted for assistance on the technical points to my colleague, Mr. Stephenson, who is in charge of the Railway Department at the London School of Economics.


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